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FAST BIKES

OCTOBER 2015 ISSUE 306

GIXER JUNKIES

OVERDOSING ON THE
SUZUKI GSX-R RANGE

600 vs 750 vs 1000



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Professional riders on closed road

Ninja ZX-10R - Superbike Supremacy

Representative Example:

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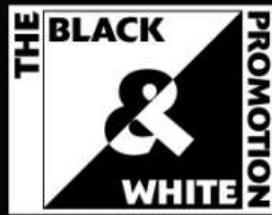
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Kawasaki



Class Is Permanent

It may seem at times that we're somewhat dismissive about Suzuki's GSX-R range. In not meaningfully updating any of the bikes in years it makes leaving the Gixer range at home for our big tests an easy decision. We know their place in the pecking order, and when comparing the GSX-R1000 to a spanking new R1 to determine ultimate place there's no way the 160bhp electronics lite Suzuki can tackle the tech feast of the new R1.

But that doesn't make the range irrelevant. We took a GSX-R1000 to the Millau bridge last year and had one of the finest times ever running it up and down the Gorge du Tarn – we nearly made a groove in the Tarmac... All three GSX-Rs are superb bikes, staggeringly fast and flattering to your skills. That they don't possess massive power or are daubed in the latest trinkets matters not when you open the taps and let the full, unadulterated hit of 160bhp smear its way over the Tarmac.

And that lack of development lends itself to one crucial area – price. If you want the latest and greatest, you're going to have to pay for it. With the latest crop of superbikes you're going to have to part with at least £15,000. If you can 'make do' with a GSX-R1000 then you can lop £5k off that and still have as good a time as the next man – or woman.

That's why we've seen loads of the 2015 MotoGP coloured bikes on the roads – they represent amazing value. Racking up nearly a 1,000 sales in the range this year is healthy in these times, but we got round to thinking which GSX-R we'd buy. So we gathered all three, took them to Cadwell Park and had a ball blasting them round Lincolnshire's hallowed ground.

In a similar vein, we've taken two top A2 bikes and challenged them to swim in the inters group of a trackday – when really they should sink. You'll be surprised at the results – a few inters riders were...

Then we got ready for the Silverstone GP. We interviewed Andrea Iannone on the Day of Champions, and were staggered at the number of people there on the Thursday. Add to that decent sales figures in the industry (thanks to the likes of the GSX-R), generally positive PR about bikes and you've got an industry that's got its feel good factor back.

So let's see a bit of swagger about biking, be proud of riding a bike – and do it as much as you can (it's not going to stay warm and dry for ever...).

Have a brilliant month.

Rootsy



36

Gixer Junkies: Mainlining Suzuki's finest...



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Upfront

PLANET FAST BIKES - NEW METAL, NEWS & REVIEWS

*That's 200mph, but on
a closed, private road...*



*Helmet cam - or
bell end cam?*

Video Nasties

Sometimes we Fast Bikers don't do ourselves any favours in front of the lens...

With yet another biker going out with a little video camera and incriminating himself by achieving racing speeds on the public road, we thought it was high time we went over some camera dos and don'ts when it comes to recording your 15 seconds of fame.

Ashley Dixon from Plymouth borrowed a couple of brand new bikes from his local dealer (despite earning only £130 a week from his job at a supermarket) and set about recording himself at speeds of up to 153mph. But capturing this feat in this own internal

hard drive wasn't enough for Dixon, who then went and put the footage of his spirited ride up on YouTube. Because the police like nothing better than being given evidence on a plate, it didn't take long before they were knocking on the door of Dixon asking him to accompany him to the station. The subsequent court case saw a judge sentence Dixon to eight months in jail.

This is on the back of Jack Sanderson's infamous crash on the Cat and Fiddle run, where he overtook on double white lines, ran wide out of a corner, only just missed a car

and then went careering down a bank. Had the footage not been stuck up on YouTube Sanderson wouldn't have spent 12 weeks in prison contemplating his actions. The list goes on. Lewis Shallcross, also from Plymouth, was caught by the police with a helmet cam full of incriminating evidence of his wheelies through the city. Back in 2002 Wayne Soman strapped a video camera to his bike that the police then prised off for a little look, where they saw him riding at 165mph. The list goes on, both in this country and all around the world.

The Black Prince and Ghostrider got away with their little rides because they lived and rode in a more innocent age. They could deny everything, because they weren't caught at the time. Now all it takes is an ill judged video of some horsing around that could see you in the chokey for a few months. We don't doubt that there's a time and a place for cameras, not least in protecting yourself in an accident (Rootsy wishes he'd had one running during his little incident), so here's a little run down of what to do and not do when it comes to recording yourself on your ride...



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COMPETITION!



Win Tickets and Hospitality for Silverstone BSB!

Fast Bikes has teamed up with the Tsingtao MV Agusta BSB squad to offer you guys and gals the chance to experience the racing from an altogether more luxurious perspective. We have two sets of a brace of weekend tickets up for grabs for the Silverstone round on the 2nd-4th of October. But you won't only just get through the gate, you'll also get a tour of the MV garage, meeting both riders and machines up close

and personal, and also gain access to the team's hospitality suite all weekend, too. Can't be bad at all, eh? And considering Tsingtao's line of business, there may be a beer or three in it for you...

■ To be in with a chance of winning a pair of these tickets, just head to www.fastbikesmag.com where you'll find all the entry details. But you'd best get busy because the competition closes on September 28th 2015.

RECORDING – MUST DO:

- Ride in a sensible manner all day long.
- Hide a camera discreetly so it's not spotted if you're pulled over. Stealth is the name of the game.
- Delete anything naughty as soon as you get home.
- Have an alias YouTube account and some IP blocking software if you must load stuff up.
- Get good at pixelating moving images.

RECORDING – MUST NOT DO:

- Upload all the gory details to your own YouTube account from your home computer.
- Point the camera at your speedo – or set it to kph.
- Film all the way to your front door or garage. That's almost like cheating for the police.
- Show the registration plate of your mate riding like a twat. Unless he's having an affair with your missus...
- Ride on the same route all the time – they'll be waiting...

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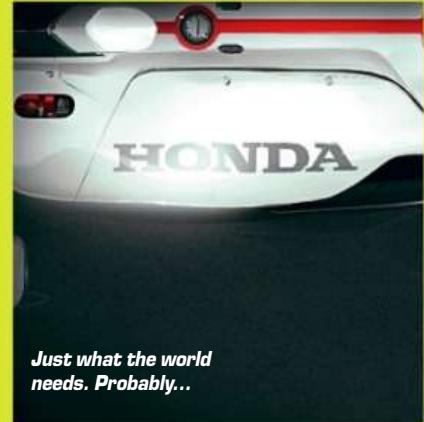
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Above: X4 Day Tankbag (black)



Just what the world needs. Probably...

HONDA PROJECT 2&4

What with the car folk doing a spectacularly average job in powering the McLaren Formula 1 team in 2015, it seems that Honda is turning to its chums in the two wheel department to hustle things along at the Big H.

Called Project 2&4, Honda set out to shake things up within its departments to come up with an inspiring project that Honda could show off. The Asaka motorcycle design team won the in house competition and Honda presented the results to the world at the Frankfurt car show – with this teased image coming out before the event. In short, it's a car with an RC213V motor in it, so two wheels too many. But some wags might suggest that these efforts might have been better channelled to produce something for we bike buyers to salivate over, something we know Honda is hugely capable of, but seemingly reluctant to do so at this current time..

VIDEO NASTY: CANEPA IN THE DOCK

Former Ducati test rider and EBR WSB racer Niccolo Canepa will find out his fate at the end of September, after footage emerged of him appearing to hit the front brake of a fellow rider, causing him to crash. David Cappato broke his collarbone in the crash at Mugello, hence the serious assault charges levied.



THE GRID OF NEWS

Who's qualified where in this month's news race?

EBR SAVED?

■ Erik Buell has had more comebacks than Lazarus, and it seems that his EBR firm is back on two feet after it imploded back in April. 49 per cent owners, Hero, and a company called American Metals have stuck in cash to revive the brand – the former to keep the skills of the Buell firm so vital to the massive Indian operation. The latter's interest is less well known...



SALE OF THE CENTURY

■ New 65-plate sales figures were sent through to the office, with every sector that's measured showing a month-on-month increase. Year to date figures show the entire industry up 13.1 per cent, with even supersport bikes up 11.1 per cent. It's boom time for nakeeds, with nearly 20,000 of the buggers sold this year so far. Yamaha is doing a roaring trade with the MT-09 Tracer and MT-07 both selling over 1,000 units. Ducati will also be chuffed with a bike in the top ten sales for the first time, with nearly 750 sold so far.



REAL DEAL

■ Top of the deal charts for this month is the CB1000R, currently on a Honda wide offer of zero per cent. The offer requires a chunky £1,800 putting down first before you pay £115 for three years to give you £4,000 to fund at the end of the deal. There are your t's and your c's to scroll through, but we don't often see zero percent deals from Honda, and we've always loved the CB1000R.

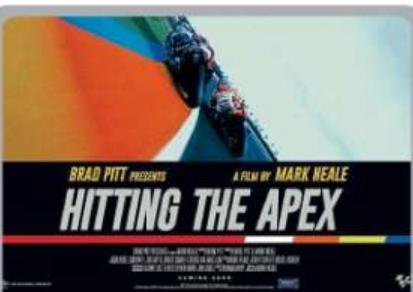


DIRTY BUSINESS

■ The International Dirt Bike show will be held from Thursday 29th October through to Sunday 1st November, and should be just the ticket for those wanting to get their two-wheel fix when the weather turns against them. Packed full of the latest bikes, bargains galore and plenty of entertainment you can get early bird tickets now for just £8, which we reckon is a bit of a bargain. Head to www.dirtbikeshow.co.uk for more.

CONFEDERATE STATE

■ We're quite partial to an American Confederate here at Fast Bikes. We're not sure why, by this new P51 Combat Fighter cements our feelings. Outrageously styled, stupendously engined (claiming 200bhp) and minimally equipped, it certainly does the business in all departments, and if you're in the market for this sort of thing, we doubt it'll disappoint. Price? Ah, well, that'll \$113,900 please...



HITTING THE APEX

■ We've loved Mark Neale's two previous MotoGP films, Faster and Fastest, and we licked our lips at the prospect of a third – Fasterer, or something. In the end, the film was called Hitting the Apex, a documentary following six riders in the series, and it secured the big name signing of Bradley Pitt, who came in to produce the film.



NEW DUKE FOR 2016?

■ With the leap between the 690 Duke and the 1290 version being about as big a jump as you can get, it's pleasing to see a new KTM Duke 800 about to be released by our Austrian friends. Pictures of it in its test trim have surfaced in Europe, and they show a parallel twin motor, wrapped in everything that suggests it could be a Street Triple biter. A Super Duke GT is also on the cards, which we like the sound of too, as well as the firm's plans for a V4 sportsbike which a kidney is on eBay to fund it...



NEW(ISH) 2016 Z1000SX

■ Hot on the heals of the release of the Suzuki GSX-S1000F comes the news that Kawasaki has a new Z1000SX up its sleeve for 2016 to try and spoil the Suzuki's party. However, the new bike doesn't offer a huge range of revisions, merely a new slipper clutch and some fresh paint. And that's about it – aside from the fact you won't be able to buy a non-ABS model. That said, there's no price rise to swallow either, so that'll be £9,699 to you, squire.

JUAN GARRIGA

■ A life lived flat out came to an abrupt end in August. Juan Garriga was nearly best remembered for his battle with Sito Pons in the 1988 250cc class, before graduating up to the 500cc class. Of course, his brushes with the law quickly overtook his racing notoriety, with a two year sentence handed down to the Spaniard for drugs and weapons offences. Garriga died after a traffic accident in Barcelona, he was 52.





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Moto Photo

Perfect preparation prevents poor performance...

Someone I once knew had a theory that dice only had a finite number of sixes in them, so that if you threw a six when circumstances didn't require it you'd basically wasted it. I've always thought the same about sunny days, and also that the same applies to my effort.

As we'd gone a long way in a van (France), had exclusive use of a very nice private track, and the next day was bound for unbroken sunshine from dawn, I decided to use one of my sixes and put some effort in to see what my best might

look like. Like a proper pro' I even thought about at what angle the sun would hit each of Mireval's left handers at 9am, choosing this one so we're looking slightly into the sun. If one thing is the secret to that elusive commercial look, it's that. You get a kind of depth to the image, you get a warmth but with slightly blue shadows, and curves look more curvy rather than just flat coloured shapes. It just takes a bit of work with the raw file later to lighten up any shaded areas that haven't had any light bounced into them.

I won't go into Simon's contribution to the picture as he pretty much always does this. I'm starting to think that he's actually a mechanoid and that he had to visit a very special kind of surgeon to get his hand repaired last month. He's reliable enough that for once I put myself right in the danger zone, sitting on the edge of the track – sometimes it's worth the effort and a roll of the dice. 

■ Nikon D300s, 300mm, 1/1000th sec at f5.6, ISO 200.

WORDS AND PIC: JONNY GAWLER





Is there any finer sight in road racing?

Season's Meetings...

WORDS: ROOTSY

IMAGES: YAMAHA, BMW, VALVOLINE, IOMTT

For many, the road racing season starts and finishes with the TT, but that belies the wealth and breadth of the season, with racing all over Europe providing thrills and spills galore. Throughout August there are races all over the shop. In Northern Ireland the focus shifts to the former MotoGP round at the Dundrod track, before moving south to the Faugheen 50 and Cork road races. In the Czech Republic, the Horice races are legendary – with plenty happening on track and also off it with the racing being one big excuse for a mammoth drinking session. Spain sees the tiddlers and classic bikes race through the little town of La Baneza, while back on the spiritual island home of road racing the Classic TT and ManxGP festival offer a chance for the pros to have a more laid back week of racing – and the amateurs to test their skills on track in the Manx.

Ulster Grand Prix

The Ulster GP should offer the perfect week of racing. The hills above Belfast should bask in summer sun, while the riders scorch round a track they all confess to adoring.

But the weather hasn't been particularly kind to the event of late, and the picture of Peter Hickman below shows a scene from this year's event – although the rain didn't spoil the racing in the way it has in the past. Of course, the big news was Guy Martin's accident in Thursday's Dundrod 150 – a nasty one – made that little bit more bearable with

the organisers taking out the bank where Martin would have ended up.

We spoke to Clark of the Course Noel Johnston before the event and he stressed upon us how the event evolves and how safety improves – and moving that bank was a direct result of Dean Harrison's accident at Ireland's corner the year before. Lessons will also be learned after the sad death of supersport rider Andy Lawson, a debutant at the race this year, and we offer our condolences to his family and friends.

Come to the UlsterGP for the racing – and stay for the weather!



The Ulster Winners...



Peter Hickman

The Lincolnshire lad's debut season on the roads last year was impressive, and to fulfil his potential in the second year, by winning the second superbike race at the Ulster, is nothing short of miraculous. The likes of Hickman and Lee Johnstone are sticking it to the established runners and riders, meaning that everyone has to up their game to keep ahead of the rapidly chasing pack.



Lee Johnstone

Lee Johnstone shouldn't be able to pilot a 200bhp Beemer given his diminutive stature, but behind that broad smile and bushy beard lives a man with dogged determination. Jonhstone has had a brilliant year – and not just because he spent the day with us at Anglesey before the season started. Decent results at the NW200, proper progress at the TT and three great wins at the Ulster Grand Prix confirm that former British Junior Superstock champion Johnstone is now a force to reckon with – on any type of track you'd care to mention.



Bruce Anstey

Anstey's true cake of a year had the cherry plumped on top with a victory in the first UlsterGP superbike race – his 11th at the event. It was a cracking race, sadly stopped short, meaning that we were denied the thrilling conclusion that the race offered. But the victory meant that the old guard still had something to show from the event, and proved that they'd be a force to reckon with in 2016 – and that beards are officially fast.



Schleizer Dreieck

It's not widely known that as part of the German IDM series the racing visits a roads track at Schleizer Dreieck in the old East Germany. In use since 1922, the track has since been shortened, diverted from the town and safety improvements made to turn it into a new track that was opened in 2004. Perhaps it's the track's decent safety record that tempted Kev Coghlan's MRS squad to release the Scottish rider to

take over duties for the already injured Max Neukirchner and Damian Cudlin in the German MGM team. The Scottish rider had a crash in superpole that he jumped up from. But another crash in the second race, at one of the fastest parts of the track, left the Scotsman with six damaged vertebrae and a long battle to fitness, ending his promising European Superstock season on the new Yamaha R1. Get well soon, Kev.



Ah, the open road...



Classic TT

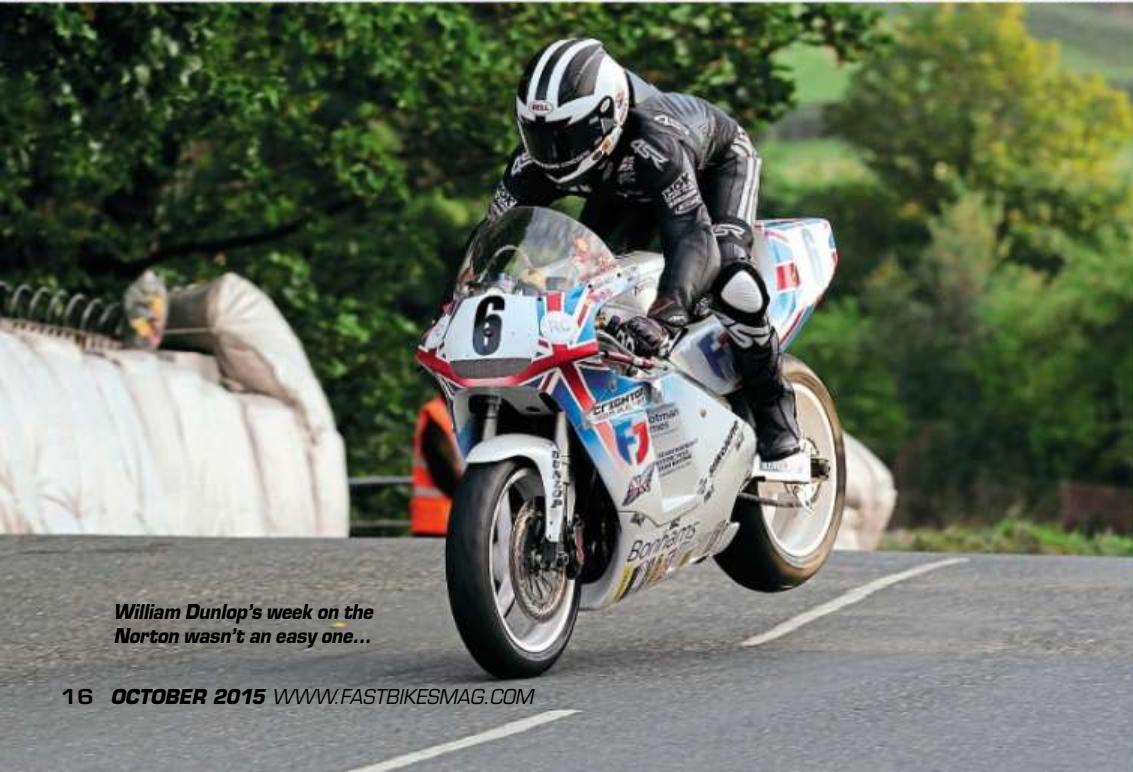
The most fun event of the year award has to go to the Classic TT, an award (if it weren't imaginary) it would have won for three years on the bounce now. Each year sees more drool inducing machinery taking the Steam Packet over to the Island. The bench was set ridiculously high after Clive Padgett dusted off an old Yamaha YZR500 stroker for Bruce Anstey to race (stunningly so, too), and racers being racers just want to be able to compete – hence the fantastic upgrades in race weaponry.



Foggy broke the TT lap record in 1992 at 123.61mph. Anstey on a 1992 bike? 126.261mph!



Michael Dunlop returned to winning ways at the Classic TT



William Dunlop's week on the Norton wasn't an easy one...

Ripper Bruce!

Bruce Anstey already shattered the record for the fastest classic lap on the YZR last year (making him the fastest two-stroke rider ever in the process), but the Kiwi rider shattered this in the Formula 1 race, breaking the 18-minute barrier and posting an amazing 126.261mph lap (25 seconds faster than last year!). Being black flagged for a loose exhaust, however, meant that Michael Dunlop took the win on his stunning Suzuki XR69, beating his race record by a minute.

Dunlop Returns

Many would say that he'd never been away, but results, injuries and politics haven't gone Michael Dunlop's way in 2015. But on a bike he loves riding, round a track he adores, and with no pressure on him (other than that applied by Bruce Anstey), Dunlop shone in the Formula 1 race. Make no mistake, the Steve Wheatman owned Suzuki XR69 is a proper piece of kit. This 1,216cc replica machine is built to the highest standards and has got faster and faster – scoring 125mph on his last lap, even though Anstey's problems donated him a huge lead.

Norton Woes

Many were hoping for great things from William Dunlop, riding the Crighton Racing Norton that was plucked from the National Motorcycle Museum. The plan was to replicate Steve Hislop's performance in 1992, but problems plagued the bike. Spectators wanting to hear the Norton resurrected were advised to find a seat in the first few miles of the track... The bike showed its age throughout practice week, and Dunlop had to retire the bike before a lap had run in the main race.

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John McGuinness, 2015 TT Senior Winner drives the Vauxhall Movano Crewcab



Ian Hutchinson, 3 wins at the 2015 TT, drives Vauxhall Vivaro Sportive



Padgett's Racing, 2015 TT winners, drive Vauxhall Movano

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Geared Up

ALL THE LATEST, COOLEST & TRICKEST PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS

RUCKSACKS

Have you got a load to lug? No room on the bike for luggage? You need a quality rucksack to do the job, just like one of this little lot here...

Sportsbikes are getting worse and worse for carrying things. There was a time when you could get a little lock, your sandwiches and, er, a Gameboy in the boot of a 'Blade to sit alongside a substantial toolkit. But now you'd be lucky to get an Allen key in there, so you need to carry your kit by some other method. A rucksack is the quickest and easiest way to carry anything you can't fit in your pocket. We use rucksacks on a daily

basis, often just as a security blanket with nowt in, but sometimes when we're away we pack them to the gills and set off for a few days with pants, socks and a laptop all stuffed in. But a rucksack has to achieve many aims. It needs to pack stuff in well, keep it dry and be comfortable on. Buy the wrong one and you'll regret it an hour into a long journey. So have a butchers at this little lot for your next back bag...

DUCATI CORSE

£40.00



We're eschewing the one option Ducati has at £120 (the Downtown), and plumping for this more stylish and much better priced Corse option. As far as technical features go, this can't really compete, but at least it looks smart, has a removable helmet bag (a useful feature) and is made from a mixture of tarpaulin and polyester. It only has adjustable shoulder straps.

KRIEGA R30

£139.99

WWW.KRIEGA.COM

Kriega are the masters of the backpack, specialising in soft luggage for you and your bike to wear. Having used all manner of products over the years, we've yet to be let down by anything that has had a Kriega label on it. Testimony to the quality of the product is how little it's changed over the years. Get it right first time, and offer a mammoth 10 year guarantee on it, and you can see why Kriega lets the product do the talking. The R30 has the lot, its 30-litres ample space for a few days away, the ability to fend off the rain with its Cordura outer and inner sack, useful pockets, the Quadloc harness system to ensure supreme comfort so the weight isn't all on your shoulders, and the ability to clip on extras (like a US-10), should you need. All this brilliance doesn't come cheap, but given the guarantee you won't be buying a new one before the decade's out.

OGIO NO DRAG MACH 5

£129.95

WWW.OGIO.CO.UK



Always offering something different in terms of looks, Ogio products also deliver when it comes to functionality. The latest backpack, this No Drag Mach 5 uses the streamline design so favoured by the American firm. It doesn't deform and sits well on your back. This fit is also aided by the shoulder 'gasket' and back padding, so you and it are as one cutting through the air. The outer is all but waterproof, while the inner features a large main compartment plus a laptop sleeve. Smaller, cheaper versions are available.

YAMAHA TECHNO

£50.20

WWW.YAMAHA-MOTOR.EU

We're impressed about how much is offered by the Techno, Techno, Techno, Techno. There's the obvious branding (if that's your thing), two zipped compartments, space for a lappy and tablet, an integrated lid lugger, padded pack and adjustable shoulder and chest strap. No word on its rain shrugging abilities, but for a very random 20p over 50 quid it's a great option for all you Yammy fans out there.

OXFORD AQUA B25
£49.99
WWW.OXPROD.COM



We've been mighty impressed with the improvements to Oxford's rucksack range of late. The Aqua B25 is a tweak to previous versions, and offers a 25-litre carrying capacity, height and width straps, compression straps, pockets all over the shop and that water repelling, wipe clean, welded seam construction. It uses a roll top, giving the rain no chance of doing any damage. For under £50 it's a star performer in our eyes, so get stuck in.



GIVI XS317

£108.99

WWW.GIVI.CO.UK



The snazzy title belies a very workmanlike bag from luggage kings Givi. The outer is made from 600/1200 Denier PU material, with an anti-UV treatment added.

Storage-wise, there's a compartment for regular guff plus a sleeve for a laptop up to 15.6". 30 litres is what you'll fit in. Waist and sternum compression straps ensure everything sits snuggly on your person. There's a helmet bag for when you're off the bike, and a safety lock system to stop scrotes. A rain cover is your protection against heavy rain.

BMW FUNCTION

£86.21

WWW.BMW-MOTORRAD.CO.UK



All it's missing is an 'al' at the end of its name and this BMW option would be perfectly titled. With subtle branding, this isn't just a backpack for Beemer bikers, and it offers lots for all. It uses a tarpaulin outer, is expandable to 30 litres, has a waterproof main compartment with an inner pouch and the roll top design ensures the wet stays out. A lid can be fitted into the bottom, and there are four sprayproof external pockets. With straps galore, it fits well, and four buckles mean it can also be fitted to a bike too.

HELD ZANIO

£55.99

WWW.HELD-UK.CO.UK



Made from waterproof tarpaulin, this is a bag designed for the typical British summer, though should prove its worth in winter, too. The seams are welded, so resistant to water seeping in, the closure on top is of the roll-top variety, and we reckon it looks pretty smart, too. Held says you'll fit up to 30 litres inside.

SW-MOTECH BARACUDA

£85.82

WWW.MOTHAUS.COM

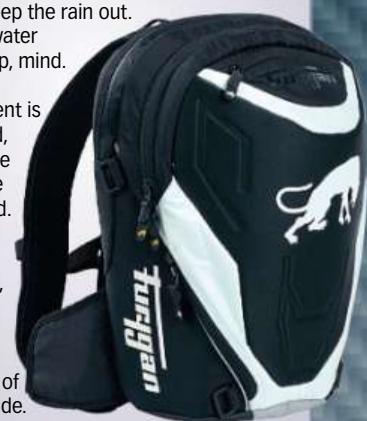


Made from tough TPU, there's not much that the weather can throw at this German brand's bag with any meaningfulness. For comfort's sake, it uses a padded harness system and sternum and waist strap to help to keep the weight off your shoulders. It'll hold 30 litres of your life, and features a laptop sleeve. Retroreflective detailing adds to your road presence (that's if you don't plump for the fluoro yellow option).

FURYGAN TORQUE

£79.99

WWW.NEVISM.UK.COM



Here's a bag with an aerodynamic bent to it, which should help those in a hurry because that means less buffeting about. Its 100 per cent polyester firm outer is tough, though it needs the help of a cover to keep the rain out. There's a water resistant zip, mind. The laptop compartment is fleece lined, which we're sure will be appreciated. The straps, including a waist strap, are all adjustable. You should fit 22-litres of you life inside.

ALPINESTARS TECH AERO

£129.99

WWW.ALPINESTARS.COM



Astars make a decent range of packs for backs, but sitting at the top of the tree is this, the Tech Aero. Non-chocolate bar-based, this Aero is profiled to reduce drag whilst wearing it, it's designed to keep stresses on your body to a minimum. Made with a 600 denier poly fabric, that jumps to 1200 on the base, it's durable and water resistant. It expands from 16 litres to 26 and also accommodates a laptop sleeve. A sleeve also allows the fitment of the Bionic back protector to incorporate this as part of a safety system.

DAINESE D-EXCHANGE LARGE

£89.99

WWW.DAINESE.COM



Dainese gives you 18-23 litres of space to play with, certainly enough for an overnight stay. There's a rain cover, so the bag itself needs a helping hand during inclement weather. It has a laptop pocket in, along with five other inner pockets. The shoulders are adjustable and there are reflective inserts to make you easier to spot at night. Nice.

Geared Up

ALL THE LATEST, COOLEST & TRICKEST PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS

DUCATI: 899 MAGNESIUM CLUTCH COVER

■ The bean counters at Ducati skimped on a few areas of the 899 Panigale, sticking on aluminium clutch covers instead of the lovely magnesium covers on the bigger bikes. You can right this wrong, however, with the purchase of a set of official Ducati magnesium covers straight from the accessories catalogue. Then you'll get kudos galore and the chance to revel in the warm glow of exclusivity that you've just created (as well as lopping off a little weight).

£429.86

www.ducatiuk.com



OXFORD: SPARTAN ARAMID JEANS

■ Aramid is the generic name for Kevlar. But if you want to call your jeans 'Kevlar' then you have to pay DuPont lots of money for the privilege. So companies looking to save a few quid stick with Aramid, such as these Spartan jeans that use a 250g Aramid fibre in their construction in key areas to compliment the 14oz denim outer. There are no claims of protection levels here, although there are shock absorbing knee protectors.



£79.99

www.oxprod.com

OXFORD: USB CHARGING KIT

■ Seeing as phones, tablets and sat-navs dominate the modern world, Oxford offer a way to charge them all with this new USB charging kit. Using a useful 2.1 amp output, it'll charge most things off your bike's battery. It fits easily, is splash resistant and has short circuit protection. You'll then need to add one of many fused leads offered.

£19.99

www.oxprod.com



KNOX: ALL SPORTS

■ Not content with designing some new smart, clever and very buyable new leather jackets (as well as all the protection kit), the fine folk at Knox has moved into the textile world with this All Sports jacket. It uses the company's Dual Fit System, where you open up the underarm zips to enlarge the fit, and thus be able to comfortably fit in an armoured shirt underneath. The jacket itself is made from a woven twill with abrasion resistant panels and a waterproof and breathable membrane. Then there's ribbed cuffs and collars, a breathable cotton interior and YKK zips.

£229.99

www.planet-knox.com

ALPINESTARS: STADIUM SHOE

■ We wouldn't advocate wearing this pair on a trackday, but these Alpinestars Stadium daps work as one up from a pair of trainers. They actually offer CE certified protection, with beefed up ankles, an internal toe box and heel counter reinforcement. The outer is made from a perforated microfibre. Then the shoe sells itself on the looks – whether you're able to carry the style off is down to how down wid da kidz you are...



£129.99

www.alpinestars.com

WUNDERLICH: FOLDING FUNNEL

■ Now here's a simple idea to get fluid into those hard to reach places. This folding funnel from Kraut rockers Wunderlich is made from an oil and petrol resistant material and is flexible, so can be rolled up and stashed when not in use. When required, you simply roll it into a funnel shape and slug whatever needs fluid into wherever it goes. Wipe it clean and that's it, you're done.



£6.00

www.nippynormans.com

DAINESE: LAGUNA SECA EVO DIV

£809.99

The curiously named 'Dry Lake Div' is Dainese's CE Cat 2 certified two piece summer suit that comes packed with features from its full on race department. Made from what Dainese call Tuto cowhide, this differs to the year-round Estiva suit thanks to its use of air vents on the side, a NanoFeel liner and 3D bubble liner to keep things cool while all around you is hot. There are aluminium inserts on the shoulders for cool sparks when you bin it. The suit uses the firm's Bi-axial elasticated insert system to improve flexibility – and comfort. Then you've got you aerodynamic airhump, sliders, pockets on the inside and a cleaning kit.

www.dainese.com**ARAI: RX-7V**

We've managed to get hold of a new RX-7V to test, so it's interesting to see how it stacks up against the previous version – the GP. The differences aren't massive, but all add up to make the 7V a decent step forward in terms of comfort, security and usability. The visor pivot point is an inch lower than before, and this means the sidepods are smaller and in a less important area for the lid. The diffuser is larger, to the tune of 20mm, and this is designed to extract heat from within better. The use of a new resin lops 30 grams of the shell's weight, but that would be hard to notice on the hoof. There's also a new interior material which feels lush on, and should keep that feeling thanks to its washability. Roots moaned a bit about the fit of his GP, but his initial feelings on the new lid are more positive – especially now that the visor opening tab has been made more user friendly. They'll be in the shops in the autumn, so start saving up now!

£599.99

www.whyarria.co.uk**VENHILL: QUICK RELEASE BRAKE COUPLING**

The words 'quick release' get us slightly aroused, as the thought of the engineering that goes into these products (be they brake lines or bras) are all designed with the end user in mind. These Venhill brake couplings allow lines to be removed and reconnected in seconds – no fuss,

no muss. Perfect for racing – or for a flash bike – they secure together with a bayonet fixing, then connected back up without having to bleed anything back up. They are designed to fit to the firm's Powerhouse Plus lines, meaning easy integration.



£71.92

www.venhill.co.uk**SUZUKI: HAMAMATSU T-SHIRT**

This t-shirt could only come from one place – China! But that's only because that's where all t-shirts come from. It, of course, celebrates all things Suzuki and pays homage to the brand that we think will be on the up next year. So get in early and fly the Suzuki flag with this t-shirt that does all the things that a t-shirt should.



£25.00

www.suzuki-gb.co.uk**ALPHA RACING: REARSETS**

These beautifully made German 'fußrastenanlagen' are just the job for those wanting to upgrade from the flip-up standard pegs on the big RR Beemer. Made from 7075 aluminium, the levers are adjustable ten ways and have folding tips on the brake and gear lever, as well as rubber sleeves to make it a less harsh shift. They can be used either as standard, or flipped into a race pattern. And considering they are so desirable, their price of under £350 makes them almost a bit of a bargain – alright, we'll settle on good value.

£349.44 www.primefactorsracing.com**CLASSIC ADDITIONS: COVER**

Want to pamper your bike when you're not astride it giving it the berries? Treat it to one of these luxurious covers. Made from a lycra blended satin and sporting a fleece interior, they come in a variety of colours, with the option to add a print to it to really personalise the job. They come in two sizes – supersports and one for larger bikes – and are just the job for the one you love.



£70.00

www.classicadditions.com

TURISMO VELOCE 800



Emotional Touring.



TURISMO VELOCE 800 The emotion of Touring together with riding pleasure: 5" TFT color display, FULL LED lighting, windshield adjustable with one hand and long range thanks to a 22 L fuel tank and detachable panniers*. TURISMO VELOCE is designed to help you discover new roads in maximum comfort, bend after sweeping bend in the inimitable MV Agusta style. TURISMO VELOCE 800: there is almost unlimited space out there for your next two wheels adventure.



Dr. M. V. Agusta
Via G Macchi
2110 Varese
Italy

Medication dates:

JULY - SEPTEMBER
2015

Patient name: NEW CUSTOMER Visit: TODAY

Patient address: ANY OFFICIAL MV AGUSTA DEALER

Diagnosis: FEELINGS OF INADEQUACY, GENERAL DISCONTENT

Patient notes: SPEAKS OF MEDIOCRE PERFORMANCE,

LACK OF PEER ATTENTION AT MOTORCYCLE MEETS/GATHERINGS.

POOR LEVEL OF ATTRACTION TO POTENTIAL PARTNERS.

Prognosis: WE HAVE FOUND AFTER EXTENSIVE STUDY THE
MAIN CAUSE TO BE THE CURRENT MACHINES THESE RIDERS ARE
USING, WHICH WHILST PERFECTLY ADEQUATE DO NOT EVOKE
FEELINGS OF ENJOYMENT OR PRIDE OF OWNERSHIP.

Prescription: WE RECOMMEND THE PURCHASE OF A NEW MV
AGUSTA. TAKE THIS AD TO YOUR NEAREST DEALER AND WE WILL
PAY £750 ON TOP OF THE DEALER PART EXCHANGE VALUATION.



Warning, side effects may include prolonged periods of enjoyment,
excessive smiling and attention. Use with care when operating.

Recommended Dose:

675cc-1090cc.
TO BE RIDDEN ONCE BEFORE AND ONCE AFTER WORK.

ARE YOU SITTING *Confor*



Aching knees, bad backs and dodgy wrists; age or injury gets the better of us all eventually. But before you get depressed at the thought of trading in your beloved sportsbike for some leather chaps, a bandana and a lump of American metal, take a good hard look at the staggering sports adventure sector first.

It's a genre that's blossomed spectacularly over the past decade, with most manufacturers jumping on the bandwagon that BMW's hugely successful GS created to produce bikes that

offer rugged looks – even if you'd only cross a county on them, rather than a continent.

But, like in the sportsbike world, an arms race has ensued, with the class moving from an air-cooled Boxer lump to world superbike derived engines in the space of a few short years – a situation we can only applaud.

Often the home of new tech, possessing sophisticated styling – and owning a price tag to suit – the tall rounder class has come a long way from the blurring of the GS with the likes of the more humble Yamaha Fazer 1000.

To prove the point, even BMW has admitted that the GS's butch new rivals are nibbling away too much at its sales, now prising the modified S 1000 RR motor into a tall chassis, creating the dynamically amazing S 1000 XR.

Despite the Ducati Multistrada 1200, Kawasaki Versys 1000 and BMW S 1000 XR sitting under the same umbrella by definition, blasting these bikes around on a multitude of roads, and clocking up some decent miles in the process, highlighted just how uniquely qualified they each are. Here's what we made of them.

tally?

WORDS: DANGEROUS BRUCE
PHOTOGRAPHY: JOE DICK

**Big power, big seats and big bars.
Welcome to the comfortable world
of nuclear powered adventure bikes...**



Kawasaki Versys 1000

Life's a grind...

If you were to judge this book by its cover, the outcome for the big Versys wouldn't be a happy one. Despite being updated for 2015, the Kawasaki looks dated and basic compared to the other two tech heads here.

The cockpit department looks like the last hire car available in a Spanish airport. There are only a couple of buttons to push at on the bike unlike the thumb-fest on

the others. Those on offer operate the dash's menu and are used to toggle through the bike's two power modes (Full or Low), as well as the three tier KTRC traction control menu (which can also be switched off altogether). There's no fancy electronic suspension adjustment on this bike, with the only tweaks being possible to the rear shock for rebound and preload adjustment.

The Versys can take on the lot...



The good news is that the standard set-up is pretty awesome, proving reasonably firm and complementing the otherwise long and heavy motorcycle in the bends. Ground clearance is a tad limiting, but as long as you don't mind decking out the pegs, it's likely you'll be impressed by the Kawasaki's cornering prowess. The bike can hold a decent line, deals well with bumps and has polite table manners at slower speeds and in town; never feeling overly heavy or lardy, despite its looks. What it doesn't do well, however, is high speed stability...

Wind the torquey and rapid in-line-four motor up and you'll be

hitting triple figures before you know it. What you'll then be very conscious of, however, is how much the bike now weaves. It's not terrifying, but can be unsettling and it only gets worse with added pace. The same goes for harsh vibrations, which start hitting you through the low-set pegs and the wide bars once you get over the 6,000rpm mark. There's no blatant cure for this and long rides result in tingling toes and fingers, but riding the bike at less than six grand is sacrilege given its lust for life.

Despite having a tremendous amount of useable oomph from low in the show, the Kwak thrives on revs – and it sounds all the



Not the pipes of peace...

KAWASAKI VERSYS 1000 £9,749



ENGINE The motor is the much used and developed inline four 1,043cc engine from the Z series (Z1000 and SX variants), but tweaked for the touring purpose of the Versys. Reduced compression ratios, changed cam profiles and new valves and springs all focus power and torque lower in the range. Longer intake funnels also change the motor's characteristics, while throttle bodies are smaller than on other Zeds. Internal gear ratios are also different, with a shorter first and second gears, and everything longer above third.

CHASSIS The generally basic aluminium twin-tube frame incorporates changes from the rest of the Zed range for revised rigidity and a shallower rake. Additionally, reinforcing pipes add extra rigidity and offer a degree of engine protection in the process. The KYB front fork uses a larger piston and improved valving to transmit better direction changes from compression to rebound. The changes make the fork 205 grams lighter. The rear shock uses a horizontal back-link configuration, as seen on the far sportier ZX-10R.

Highlights

- ▷ Big comfy seat
- ▷ Less than £10k
- ▷ 3-level TC
- ▷ Interesting style
- ▷ 250kg (kerb)
- ▷ 104bhp

TRACK **2**

Not with those pegs

FAST ROAD **6**

Hope you like to weave

HOOLIGAN **5**

Go home, dad!

NEW RIDER **6**

Pick me, pick me

DESIRABILITY **5**

It's not you, it's me



better for them, too. I was properly impressed by the engine's versatility. The gearbox is decent and the standard slipper clutch does a great job of aiding the rear wheel from locking when you're braking hard and crashing through the gearbox.

I wasn't expecting the Versys to be so well suited to hard riding, but it seemed to absorb everything I threw at it – and

IN DETAIL

SLIPPER CLUTCH: The Kawasaki's assist and slipper clutch is based on feedback from the race track, utilising two different types of cams simultaneously to either drive the clutch hub and operating plate apart or together.

HORIZONTAL BACK LINK SHOCK: The Versys 1000 features a near horizontal rear shock, which can be adjusted for preload and rebound. The reason for the positioning is to help improve mass centralisation, and it also benefits from being located well away from the exhaust and its heat, which can be detrimental to the suspension.

TRACTION CONTROL: Three levels of traction control comes as standard on the Versys, with a fourth option being to switch the aid off entirely. Each mode is carefully calibrated to allow differing levels of slip and the necessary intervention to bring the rear wheel under control.

POWER MODES: Riders can choose between full or low power outputs, with the latter restricting output to 75 per cent of the engine's potential. The sharpness of the throttle is also damped to aid control.

proved a right laugh whilst doing so. The bike is hugely informative, both through the chassis and the brakes, so you always know what's going on and can feel confident with it at all times on the hoof.

I never felt the traction control engage when set on level one (the least intrusive position), but was aware of the second and third levels' interactions.

Likewise, changing from Full to Lower power made a notable difference, experiencing a less sharp power pick up; ideal for wet weather riding.

A big part of me wants to not like this bike, but in truth it turned out to be the dark horse of the trio. It's nowhere near as sexy, exotic or sophisticated as the Europeans, but it's a great machine nonetheless and far more affordably priced than the other options in the field. As an everyday motorcycle, the Versys ticks most of the boxes, with its simplicity being one of its core qualities. It's biggest strength is that it's devoid of complication. ■

RIDING THE VERSYS WITH

ANYTHING LESS THAN SIX GRAND ON THE CLOCKS IS SACRILEGE GIVEN

ITS INHERENT LUST FOR LIFE... ■



Find the peg and get your grind on...

Verdict **6/10**

The Kwick punched above its weight, and its price makes it an attractive proposition. But the looks?

- + ENGINE, COMFORT, SIMPLICITY
- WEAVES, GROUND CLEARANCE, SIMPLICITY

Ducati Multistrada 1200 S



**The tech stops this.
When it's turned on...**

DUCATI MULTISTRADA 1200 S £15,595



ENGINE
The big news is the Desmodromic Variable Timing (DVT). It's able to alter the valve overlap angle via a valve timing adjuster mounted on the end of both overhead camshafts. It has two parts; an external housing locked to the timing belt, and an internal gadget that connects to the camshaft. The gadget is coaxial to the housing, and is able to rotate before or in advance depending on oil pressure in dedicated chambers, adjusted by specific valving and via a sensor. This ensures the best performance through the range.

CHASSIS
The 1200 S comes with Sachs semi-active suspension, via a monoshock and 48mm fork, bolted to a new chassis. The engine sits further up, increasing ground clearance and aiding geometry. The Sachs speaks to the IMU, which provides data for the ECUs to figure out what to do not only with the suspension, but also the rider aids and the Bosch ABS. Tyre-wise, new Pirelli Scorpion IIs adorn the bike. Brembo M50 calipers adorn the S with 330mm discs to bite on. The stocker gets 320mm discs, monoblocks, and standard Sachs set-up.

Highlights

- Leccy springs
- Sexual looks
- TFT dash
- TC, DWC, UB40
- 160 bhp
- 235kg (kerb)

TRACK 5

Seen Shakey on one

FAST ROAD 7

Good effort

Hooligan 8

Front wheel loiter

New Rider 4

Don't do it, kids

Desirability 9

Good package

When Ducati launched the Multistrada 1100 back in 2003, it's fair to say not everyone warmed to the abstract looking motorcycle. But those who rode it saw the appeal behind the sporty and comfortable hybrid.

Unlike its key rival of the time, BMW's R 1150 GS, there was no real talk of dual surface

versatility, just a great road bike with fantastic performance and good road holding. And that's the focus Ducati has retained with the subsequent variants of the second generation Multistrada, each being more powerful and technologically advanced than its predecessor.

The latest offering sports the 1,198cc L-twin motor, which mirrors the XR's 160bhp performance, but leaves the Beemer wanting in the torque department (on paper) by almost 27Nm. That's a figure that has been capitalised on by the introduction of Ducati's new Desmodromic Variable Timing (DVT) technology, designed to adapt the motor to suit the revs. That system's also helped to clean up the Ducati's act in the lower rpm zone.

The outgoing Multi' was a nightmare in urban environments – unless you rode it everywhere above 4,000rpm. Below this you risked being jerked around like a pepper pot by the hunting Testastretta motor. The fuelling on the new bike also feels smoother, although I was surprised at how much you have to rev the engine to get it on the pipe. Sub five grand felt weak.

The Ducati was also very precious about being in the right gear, getting angry and shaking if you tried to get it to pull too high a cog. Right gear, there was no holding the Duke back once it was going until you hit the limiter, which always seemed to spoil the party just as it was getting interesting. One thing which can't be complained about is the noise of the bike, which is tantalising to the ear. The induction noise alone is special, but the boom from the exhaust is an aural sensation.

The power, suspension and ABS can all be altered by accessing a menu via the left bar. It took me a bit of time to grasp the functions and plethora of options, but once in tune with the tech I was impressed by it. As with the higher spec Panigales, which share a similar high-quality TFT dash, you can fine tune the bike at the touch of a few buttons, adjusting the suspension on the fly, for example, between five different levels of firmness. The Ducati Wheelie Control is another function which can be tweaked across eight different levels of lift. Accidentally, I must have clicked the system off as I couldn't keep the Multi's front wheel on the ground. Silly me...

To ride, it feels like a big supermotard. You're plonked forward on it and it feels as though you have complete control over the front wheel, the rear being left to do what it likes. A firmer set-up is definitely preferred through the twisties, else the bike can get a bit wallowy at times; its 232kg of

The Multi' having fun on the 'Strada...



IN DETAIL

EXHAUST: The two heads feed directly into a single, three-chamber silencer, acting as a two-into-one-into-two collector that includes the catalytic converter and sound deadening material. The two aluminium end-cans are kept low and to the side to direct noise and heat away from the pillion.

ADJUSTABLE SEAT: The bike has separate seats for rider and pillion, with the former adjustable as standard from 825mm to 845mm.

CORNERING ABS: The Ducati Safety Pack is standard on the Multistrada S, featuring the Bosch 9ME cornering ABS and Ducati's traction control (both of which can be adjusted or turned off). Traditionally, ABS systems haven't worked in corners, as the rolling radius of the tyre decreases. Bosch has overcome that, preventing the front tucking under, even during hard braking and at large angles of lean. It also helps to stop the bike from standing up when braking in a bend, and distributes braking pressure to stop you as quickly and safely as possible.

RIDING MODES: Four riding modes – Urban, Touring, Sport and Enduro – are selectable via the left-hand switchgear. Each affects power delivery, traction control, ABS, wheelie control and the damping offered by the 'S' model's Skyhook semi-active suspension. All four modes can be customised to suit the rider, with a 'default' option available to return to factory presets.

Play all day!



mass exaggerating the sensation over road imperfections. This being the case, the Multi' is quick steering and a pleasure to ride, even at extreme pace.

Physically speaking, the Ducati is a huge bike, but the low seating position and relaxed riding position make it far less daunting than you'd imagine. Capable of being blitzed about, the Duke's also comfy enough to tour on, or commute. As its translated name suggests, (many roads, check me out), the Multi' is good to ride everywhere and goes especially

“THE MULTISTRADA IS A HUGE BIKE, BUT THE LOW SEAT AND RELAXED RIDING POSITION MAKE IT FAR LESS DAUNTING THAT YOU'D IMAGINE...”

well on the, er, Autobahn.

At high speeds it's extremely stable and the simple-to-operate cruise control function makes life oh-so simple. The fairing's great against the elements and it also possesses an adjustable screen; being the simplest of the test's trio to operate.

One thing which wasn't equipped as standard on the premium-spec 'S' model was a quickshifter or down blipper. Ducati has the tech, so it was surprising that this was the case. Likewise, it showed up the worst of the Multi's gearbox, which felt

overly firm to shift through and was prone to the occasional missed gear.

I liked the Ducati, but it proved far less sporting than I had envisaged. It wasn't my first choice of bike in the corners and the engine, which is certainly better to use than it was previously, didn't win me over like I'd expected it to. However, it does look the most stylish of the three – and that exhaust note gets heads turning without any effort, trust me. Like it or not, this is a class act, an attention magnet and an electronics lab on wheels.

Verdict **7/10**

Upping the game again, the new Multi' is more user friendly without losing its character. The tech all adds to the party – but comes at a price...

+ LOOKS, EXHAUST NOTE, TOP END
- PRICE, BOTTOM END, NO SHIFTER

Screen, if you want to go faster...



A GS it ain't...



BMW S 1000 XR Sport SE

Powerful, sharp handling and brimming with tech, the XR's the fourth model from the German brand's S Thou' family to grace the Tarmac and, quite simply, it's awesome.

At its heart is a reworked version of the RR's lump, packing 153bhp and an arm wrenching 107Nm of torque, identical to the motor you'll find in the S 1000 R naked. But that's where the similarities end. Taller, longer and even comfier, the XR is a hard bike to pigeonhole,

Nice rack...

possessing many great qualities and a broad-minded scope.

From the outside, it looks like any other tall-rounder, but you only need to sit on this bike to realise that it's a bit special. Plonked up high on its 840mm seat, the Beemer's ergonomics are spacious and relaxed, the rider being nestled away behind a combo of a large fairing and a sizeable, height adjustable screen.

Even when stationary, the bike feels super firm and focused, regardless of which electronically adjusted suspension set-up you've opted for.

RR fans will recognise the half analogue/half digital dash, as it pretty much mirrors the supersport's clocks, as do the intuitive-to-use and well-placed 'bar buttons. The XR on test

was a Sport SE-spec model (you can choose between standard XR, Sport or Sport SE), so it was dripping in features, including BMW's Shift Assist Pro quickshifter, cruise control and a full arsenal of riding modes.

Firing the bike into life rewards you with a throaty bark from the inline-four motor, which is controlled by a super-smooth electronically governed throttle. A button on the right allows you to toggle between Rain, Road and Dynamic riding modes, with the latter being my preference, giving full power and a far less adulterated experience from the model's Dynamic Traction Control (DTC) system. Likewise, you can switch between the suspension's Road (softer) or Dynamic (harder) settings, according to what kind of roads you're riding. For smooth and fast twisties, like the ones this test kicked off on, Dynamic was the

puppy, second guessing bumps.

The first time you wind back the throttle fully on the XR, you can't help but question how a bike so big and weighing 228kg can rocket off like it does. It's a beast and it's made all the better by that quickshifter, allowing you to keep it nailed as you notch up through the 'box. The same goes for downshifts. The clutch lever (which isn't adjustable for span) becomes redundant again, the electronics taking care of the meshing of engine revs to rear wheel speeds.

The fuelling is smooth throughout the rev range and the power delivery is consistent from 2,000rpm all the way up to its limiter. At slower speeds, the XR behaves well and you can get away with being two or three gears higher than you should be. At faster speeds, the Beemer is in its element, constantly egging you on to grow some balls and wind

BMW S 1000 XR SPORT SE £14,750



ENGINE The 999cc inline four motor is essentially extracted from the naked S 1000 R and plumbed into a new chassis. So it's not the fire-breathing 188bhp engine from the original RR, rather a 153bhp smoker. Head revision is responsible for the curbed power – new porting, cams and valve timing calming things – but only by a little. The ride-by-wire system allows the use of the full suite of sophisticated electronics. A new stainless steel exhaust system has been designed and routed with power and panniers in mind.

CHASSIS The XR gets a new four section aluminium perimeter frame, with the engine used as stressed member. The aluminium subframe is beefed up for touring work, while the swingarm is newly designed, made 65mm longer for better stability. Geometry has been changed from the R, with the XR owning a shallower steering head angle (to the tune of 0.8 degrees) for easier handling characteristics, offering 18.5mm more trail. Wheelbase is now 1,548mm, up 109mm over the R. Bars are wider and the peg position relaxed.

Highlights

- ☐ Gentleman's express
- ☐ Race ABS
- ☐ Up and down shifter
- ☐ Electronic suspension
- ☐ 153bhp (measured)
- ☐ 228kg (kerb)

TRACK 7*Take it to the TT***FAST ROAD** 9*Hold on tight***HOOLIGAN** 9*Sign up here***NEW RIDER** 4*Step away, newbie***DESIRABILITY** 9*We want one**The eyes have it...**Time to let rip...***Verdict****9/10**

BMW might be new to the sector, but they've nailed it first time out. A simply awesome bike with great handling and oodles of power...

- + EXCEPTIONAL FLEXIBILITY, GREAT TECH, EASY TO NAVIGATE.
- VIBY AT SPEEDS, USELESS MIRRORS, BASIC BASE MODEL

It's an adventure, alright...**IN DETAIL**

ENGINE: The S 1000 XR uses the same engine as BMW's S 1000 R; a detuned 160bhp version of the S 1000 RR's. Whilst the XR and R have the same gear ratios, the exhaust and fuelling on the faux adventure motorcycle are new.

FRAME: BMW decided it had to build a whole new frame and swingarm for the XR. It is both taller and longer than the R's, which has a sharper steering head angle than the sports adventure motorcycle.

ABS PRO: A new innovation from BMW is ABS Pro. The braking system works with the bike's multitude of sensors to moderate braking pressure at lean angle; reducing the risk of crashing. Unlike most other cornering ABS systems, BMW has opted to use a Continental system instead of the popular Bosch option.

COMFORT: A tall seat height is accompanied by a lot of leg room and some sensibly placed, wide handlebars. Wind protection is good, and the windscreen can be adjusted quickly and simply to suit the rider's preferences.

It'll even predict the lottery numbers...

the throttle back farther. This is the point when you come to realise that despite its adventure style guise, this is essentially a sportsbike in all but outfit. Power is plentiful and it's highly likely you could show up the majority of your mates with this bike, especially so in the corners.

The XR is staggeringly competent in the handling department, with nothing else in its category even coming close to mirroring the stability and agility of the bike, which overwhelms you with confidence at all speeds. Even in town, the well-weighted bike feels light and balanced, with my only grievance being not being able to reach the ground without being on tiptoe at a standstill. But that's what you get for being 5' 10".

Despite having the option to soften things off, I rode everywhere in the Dynamic

suspension setting and found that mode to give a firm but friendly feel at all times. Perhaps the best quality of this bike is the front end composition, which always seems planted regardless of pace or lean angle.

Comfort-wise, the Beemer is awesome. The chilled-out riding stance and ample fairing protection means it's easy to keep comfortable in the saddle over long periods of time. Handguards and cruise control only makes the experience even more pleasurable, although the strong vibrations you experience through the pegs, bars and seat at anything over 6,000rpm does put a bit of a dampener on the experience. The only cure I found was to hook another gear, wind the throttle back even more and let the massive smile that hits your face counter any nagging discomfort you may feel... 

POWER AND TORQUE



So good even RR owners have to worry...

The Verdict...

In truth, there isn't a bad bike in the bunch, albeit they're all very different in character, with differing strengths and also various weaknesses.

As an everyday motorcycle, the Kawasaki really shone. That motor is sweet – and so is the pricing. It delivered surprisingly well in the bends and proved all-day comfortable on the whole. Even the brakes were awesome and the technology on-board was, well, sufficient. As they say, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and whilst I think this bike's a five-pinter, you might have other ideas – I'm not here to judge your standards.

But if looks are what matter to you most, you've got to get your

hands on the Ducati. From the front to the back, there's not an inch of the bike that isn't stunning. And it's as striking from a distance as it is close up, with the TFT dash being a real eye-catching feature, along with its sexy sounding exhaust system. The tech is smart, plentiful and simple enough to operate. It's hard to knock the Multi's performance, although it did get shown up by both the Kawasaki and Beemer in terms of versatility. This being the case, its engine was easily the most characterful and riding the big twin was a pure pleasure.

The same goes for chucking it about in the bends where its capabilities contradicted its





TECH DATA



Kawasaki Versys 1000

ENGINE	Type Bore x Stroke Compression Fuelling Tested Power Tested Torque
	1,043cc, liquid-cooled inline four 77 x 56mm 10.3:1 Keihin EFI, 38mm throttle bodies 104bhp @ 8,700rpm 91Nm @ 7,900rpm

Ducati Multistrada S

ENGINE	1198.4cc, l/c, DVT, v-twin 106 x 67.9mm 12.5:1 Bosch RBW fuel injection 134bhp @ 9,750rpm 107Nm @ 7,750rpm
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BMW S 1000 XR Sport

CHASSIS	Frame F Suspension R Suspension Front Brakes Rear Brakes
	Aluminium twin tube 43mm USD fork, rebound and preload adj. Monoshock, rebound and preload adj. Four piston calipers, 310mm discs One piston caliper, 250mm disc

WHEELBASE	1,520mm
SEAT HEIGHT	845mm
KERB WEIGHT	250kg
FUEL CAPACITY	21 litres

DIMENSIONS	1,529mm 825-845mm 235kg 20 litres
	1,548mm 840mm 20 litres 228kg

PRICE	£9,749 Kawasaki UK www.kawasaki.co.uk
	£15,595 Ducati UK www.ducati.co.uk

PRICE	£14,750 BMW UK www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk
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● voluminous proportions, slotting in as the second best handling of the trio. As good as it was, The Multistrada failed to match the Beemer, which blew the other two bikes away on most fronts. Aesthetically, it's not quite on a par with the Multi, but it showed the others the way in the power stakes. That RR derived motor is a beast, yet so useable, too. It was the most versatile of the bunch and the least sensitive to being in the right gear, delivering power from the lowest of revs all the way to its ace sounding limiter. The Beemer's electronics were also the simplest to negotiate and delivered more than enough variety to help you get the ride you wanted from it.

But it was the handling of the XR that really secured the winning verdict. It's a superbike on stilts, but in a good way. Stable, agile and confidence inspiring, you'll be amazed at how good this bike feels to ride. 

In true S Thou style, there's lots of lean to come...



“THE BEEMER BLEW THE OTHER TWO BIKES AWAY, THOUGH IT'S NOT QUITE ON PAR WITH THE MULTISTRADA'S STYLE...”

All hail... the centrestand!



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Go Big?

Go Big, that's what it infamously proclaims on the bottom of Guy Martin's foot, but in what regard? If it's concerning women, or men, for that matter, then we'd probably pass, thanks. We'd certainly take up the offer at McDonalds (well, Al would) and when ordering spirits at the bar. But what about when it comes to the ageing Suzuki GSX-R range? Al investigates...



I was all of four-years-old in 1985, and as such I don't remember too much of the momentous events of the year. As far as trivialities were concerned, the UK witnessed the first mobile phone call by some bloke called Ernie Wise, Mikhail Gorbachev became Soviet leader, Bob Geldof worked his magic with Live Aid, and the Sinclair C5 was launched. But '85 will be remembered for the birth of a legend. No, not Bruno Mars, but rather the Suzuki's GSX-R750.

The first true sportsbike as we know it, the bike borrowed its soon to be iconic letters from the GSX-R400 built in the previous year. But the 750 quickly eclipsed the more modest pretensions of the pocket rocket and was developed over the years into bigger (GSX-R1100 and much later the GSX-R1000 variants), smaller (further versions of the 400 were made along with the release of the GSX-R600 in 1992, that was never imported into the UK until it became the SRAD version in 1997), better (the 750 has been constantly revised over three decades) and faster (various RR and Endurance

models that were made for racing) models.

I missed out on the Slabby action, trying to tame a Slingshot and enjoying the more refined water-cooled W models. So, like many, the SRAD 750 was my first proper glimpse into sportsbike hedonism, my debut sortie into feel-good thrashing in my early twenties on the road. Trying to replicate my heroes, Frankie Chili and Chris Walker on the A37 aboard an SRAD well and truly reignited the inner passion after dreary years spent on a dutiful CBR600F. I know I'm not alone with this sentiment and these early thrashes may be responsible for my hair loss now....

Skip forward another decade and in today's techno-queen society the GSX-Rs may have lost a soupçon of desirability, but a 30th birthday is still a commendable milestone. It warrants partying, drinking beyond recognition and even frenzied, public hair-held-from-your-face-by-a-stranger vomiting is perfectly acceptable. So, at a time when we've had to take cover from all the kitchen sinks being thrown by almost every other manufacturer at their top-end sportsbikes, we were all a little



Would sir like his GSX-R in small, medium or large?



The 600 is still stunningly relevant

We were disappointed when the samey-samey GSX-R aesthetics and tech specs were rolled out for another season of action in 2015.

Honestly speaking, the lack of fresh metal from Suzuki wasn't a shocking revelation. While rivals have released everything they possibly can, Suzuki's efforts have been modest, to say the least, with only small steps taken over a decade that has seen giant leaps from others. Instead, the standout feature for this season was the striking MotoGP paint scheme which, to be fair, makes all three look sublimely dapper, although we concede that others may see this more as mutton dressed as lamb...

If pricing reflective of their development isn't tempting enough (haggle, and you can buy a 1000 and 750 for the price of our SBOTY winning Aprilia RSV4 RF), all 2015 GSX-Rs (in the UK) come furnished with a medley of Yoshimura bolt-on goodies, including that tasty end-can to replace the fairly hideous (particularly on the 1000) OE unit. And it seems to have worked; Suzuki has revelled in decent GSX-R sales figures this year, with customers spellbound by the GP blue.

Three decades is worth celebrating, so we at Fast Bikes decided to host our own 30th anniversary shindig, and what better place to stage such a momentous occasion than Cadwell Park? The GSX-R range has been a noticeable absentee from our elite group tests, though gathering a near-identical looking threesome to a trackday, we hoped to be reminded of inherent and undiluted aptitude – and the reason these bikes still fly from the showrooms.

As the European armada has slowly crept into the sportsbike division over the last decade, the Gixer clique is a far more diminished clan. S 1000 RRs (sorry, S1Ks

innit) are now frequenting trackdays and are as common as muck at most circuits. But the GSX-Rs, resplendent in blue, still attracted promiscuous passers by at Cadwell, and we think you'll agree they look just as handsome in photo format here.

After signing on and sighting laps, it soon became apparent that we were the only goons riding road bikes in the fast group. What's also deeply frustrating is rocking up to Cadwell without paddock stands and tyre warmers, and wasting three laps of a 20 minute session as every other sod enjoys instant grip. Trackday evolution is a bitch, eh?

Without turning a wheel, I knew the first active stumbling block would be the tyres. As technology has moved on, so has the OE rubber selection process. While even its new Japanese counterparts are laden



Pipe bomb!



The 600 is a scrapper

THE ONE THAT STARTED IT

The 1985 GSX-R750 is often stuck at the head of the GSX-R family, but it was beaten to that accolade by the 1984 GSX-R400. Using an aluminium cradle frame with a straight line from steering head to swingarm pivot, and a liquid cooled 398cc motor, the little Gixxer was based on the learnings of the GS1000R Yoshimura TT-F3 racer. Pumping out a claimed 59bhp at 11,000rpm, it used this, and its 152kg dry weight, to great effect. The motor was based on the GSX400FW, but with bigger valves, upped compression ratio and uprated pistons and conrods. It also used advanced ancillaries, including four-piston brakes, full floater swingarm, anti-dive forks, and a 16-inch front wheel.



Verdict 7/10

Ridden in isolation, the baby Gixer is incredible but made obsolete by other 600s... and the 750

- + CHASSIS BALANCE, MECHANICAL GRIP, STILL FAST
- OE TYRES, S-DMS BUTTONS, LOOKS

Look Ma, I'm in MotoGP!

with sticky hoops, almost archaic Bridgestone BT-016s adorn the GSX-R600 and 750, and the Thou' wears sportier, grippier S20s that provide another level of grip from the 016s. Having to spend another £200 on acceptable tyres isn't ideal, although these hoops provide ample grip under road-legal assessment.

With six sessions scheduled throughout the day, it seemed logical to start dissecting the Lincolnshire countryside with the scalpel-like 600 and work my way up to the hammer blows of the 160bhp Thou'. The little bike is a bike that demands little in terms of input or quirky riding style. Confidence to push comes intuitively, as does feedback and the thrashing protocol is, thankfully, a simple one.

Within a few laps, I was regretting not wearing earplugs. That intrinsic GSX-R induction howl that embellishes all three versions is only matched by an R6 in terms of brain-shaking pain and adds to the frantic riding sensation. And it's difficult to find a more natural riding position that's been so universally accepted down the years. Everything onboard the little Gixer feels custom contoured to anyone.

The truth is it wasn't long before we'd reached the limits of the tyres; agonising because the GSX-R600 has so much more to give. Despite a lack of palpable updates, there's a real sense of compactness and togetherness that exudes unrivalled mechanical grip, and even with a pliable set-up there are no weight transfer issues which indicates it owns a balance you can work with whenever and wherever you ride.

Highlights

Baby Gixer	8
Yoshi' bolt-ons/can Showa BPFs	7
Brembos	8
187kg	4
108bhp	6
TRACK	8
<i>Restricted by tyres</i>	
FAST ROAD	7
<i>Needs a spanking</i>	
HOOLIGAN	8
<i>That induction growl...</i>	
NEW RIDER	4
<i>Stable and assured</i>	
DESIRABILITY	6
<i>Meh...</i>	

Hardly on trend, but it remains a force...

TECHNICAL Suzuki GSX-R600



ENGINE	Type	599cc, l/c, 16v DOHC, inline four
	Bore x Stroke	67 x 42.5mm
	Compression	12.9:1
	Fuelling	SDTV EFI
	Tested Power	108bhp @ 14,000rpm
	Tested Torque	61Nm @ 11,750rpm
CHASSIS	Frame	Aluminium twin spar
	Front Suspension	43mm Showa BPF, fully adj
	Rear Suspension	Showa monoshock, fully adj
	Front Brakes	Four piston Brembos, 310mm discs
	Rear Brakes	Single piston Nissin caliper, 220mm disc
DIMENSIONS	Wheelbase	1,385mm
	Seat Height	810mm
	Dry Weight	187kg
	Fuel Capacity	17 litres
PRICE	Price	£8,599 (MotoGP colours £8,899)
	From	Suzuki GB www.suzuki-gb.co.uk

**Highlights**

- Original Nutter
- S-DMS buttons
- Silver Brembos
- Free Yoshi' can
- 190kg
- 124bhp

TRACK	9
Super easy to go fast	
FAST ROAD	10
The perfect balance	
HOOLIGAN	8
Stunts galore	
NEW RIDER	4
Only one worse	
DESIRABILITY	6
Erm, meh...	

Having the entire Mackenzie clan parked up next to you at a trackday can be quite intimidating at times, though it can also be intricately informative and hugely entertaining. Having a son (Taylor) that raced a GSX-R600 in British Supersport, Niall reckons that the Suzuki struggled with extracting the right power in the right places. Insider knowledge like that is a refreshing factoid, as we can't pinpoint exactly why the lil' Gixer has been overlooked/completely non-existent on racing grids in recent years. The chassis is nothing short of stunning and, frankly speaking, the 600 is more than capable for most of us mere mortals. Shove on a set of sticky hoops and it'll lap within tenths of its rivals, relishing big lean angles and an innate balance that will never feel old-fashioned.

If we're being pernickety, it lacks the razor sharp turn-in and steering speed of newer 600s, but's the GSX-R is hardly lethargic and needed minimal effort to hustle round Cadwell, a track that requires you to bring your A game along.

With no ABS to worry about, corner entry at Cadwell was a treat aboard the 600. Showa BPFs are partially responsible for sheer braking stability and assurance, though chassis fundamentals ensure it's virtually impossible to throw shapes – it's one of the

most stable sportsbikes, let alone 600s. Even the dated slipper clutch is faultless in almost every circumstance, working with the four-pot motor to bring controlled engine braking that suits every one of Cadwell's corners.

As with all three bikes, the S-DMS power mode buttons are about the extent of the GSX-R's gadgets, and even then are utterly pointless on the 600 such is the linearity and predictable power delivery – the softer maps only sacrifice feel. Crisp throttle action, peachy fuelling and a wrist-to-rear-wheel connection that makes any ride-by-wire bike jealous means no naughty idiosyncrasies.

Despite the fact it's one of the easiest 600s to pilot, there's no hiding from its rev-hungry DNA that rewards redline action. First gear was used for Mansfield and the Old Hairpin, which would be a heinous act on some machinery, yet was pleasingly slick in all Suzuki gearboxes.

If it wasn't for a sibling, I think Suzuki would have sold another chunk of 600s. But logically thinking, the 750 makes the 600

redundant save for (minimal) insurance needs or if you're just being a bit of a soft lad. 11 per cent more expensive, the 750 offers more than the price differential between the two bikes. The grand saving of the 600 will be futilely spent on mods to still get nowhere near the bigger machine.

Still to this day, one of the nicest bikes I've raced is a GSX-R750 European Cup bike. Its relatively standard guise (Superstock spec) and sheer involvement is a credit to Suzuki's graft. For me, the GSX-R750 is also the perfect road bike. Sounding obvious for a second, it doesn't need constant abuse like a 600, overtakes are more serene, and it's far more useable than the 1000. In a world where materialism and gizmos go hand in hand, the unadulterated state of the 750 may be responsible for deterring customers. Well, that and the samey looks – techno fashionistas need not apply. Forget the looks and sod the lack of toys; if there's a better, more confidence-inspiring bike midcorner, point us to it please.

Aside from the giveaway numbers on the pillion seat cowling, the only distinguishable difference between the 600 and 750 is the fork tube colouring; gold for the Seven-Fiddy and black for the 600. I could sit here and magic up some whimsical dynamic variances between the 600 and 750, but that would involve lying. The riding position is identical, the exhaust note is (nearly) identical, the stupidly high lever angle is identical. And on the fly, handling characteristics are identical despite the 3kg love handles. Only a swift right hand application will separate the two, and that extra 20bhp makes a massive difference to proceedings. It's like riding a World Supersport bike over a stocker, only with midrange and without the constant need to refresh the engine every few hundred miles.

That 20bhp also makes maintaining and carrying momentum decidedly easier and more fluid. Sure, corner exit is more enthralling everywhere, but the faster, more



Easy does it...



Yoshi is lushy

flowing sections of Cadwell disguised the capacity benefit, while the added zip of the 750 was only fully appreciated during the last sector. Plus it was only halfway down the straights that any tickled litre track bikes managed to harvest their advantage. Such is the braking propensity, even braking markers are the same as on the 600.

There's no point lying; we get to ride some kickass bikes, which also makes it all too easy to negate the GSX-Rs. Having spent most of this year riding 2015's crop of sportsbike exotica, it seemed like the perfect time to test the GSX-R1000. Well, not so perfect if you're a die-hard Gixer junkie. Amidst a banzai bunch of 200bhp superbikes, the Suzuki feels desperately slow in a straight line for the first time in its existence, getting blitzed by more modern weaponry at Cadwell.

Thankfully, the same can't be said for its wide spread of power and corner exit heroics. As we've witnessed with the latest influx of superbikes, the downside of pursuing 200bhp peak power figures can be diminishing low-end shove and midrange usability. While it still makes most sense towards the upper echelons of revs when chasing tenths, the GSX-R1000 has an addictive, smooth feast of useable power ready to be picked up on throttle request, which makes it so favourable on the highways.



Class capacity



Same as the 600

GIXER OR GIXXER?

This debate has raged ever since the public wanted to nickname the GSX-R range. The biggest forum suggests, through its name, that it should be Gixer (that being Gixer.com), but then you get the Gixerboyz forum and the like hinting that you should just copy the bike's moniker and have the one X. Over in India, Suzuki sell and race the little 155cc Gixxer, adding weight to the double X argument. We don't know why you'd stick in another X because the X-sound is so definite, but the weight of argument seems to be on the side of Gixer.



Verdict

9/10

The perfect balance and undiluted option to the 899 Panigale. Deeply involving despite the lack of gizmos and my personal favourite of the three Gixers

- + ROAD/TRACK MIX, INVOLVEMENT, BRAKES
- OE TYRES, LOOKS, NOT A LOT

TECHNICAL Suzuki GSX-R750



ENGINE	750cc, I/c, 16v DOHC, inline four
Bore x Stroke	70.0 x 48.7mm
Compression	12.5:1
Fuelling	SDTV EFI
Tested Power	124.6bhp @ 12,750rpm
Tested Torque	74.1Nm @ 11,000rpm
CHASSIS	
Frame	Aluminium twin spar
Front Suspension	43mm Showa BPF, fully adj
Rear Suspension	Showa monoshock, fully adj
Front Brakes	Four piston Brembos, 310mm discs
Rear Brakes	Single piston Nissin caliper, 220mm disc
DIMENSIONS	
Wheelbase	1,390mm
Seat Height	810mm
Dry Weight	190kg
Fuel Capacity	17 litres
PRICE	£9,599 (MotoGP colours £9,899) From Suzuki GB www.suzuki-gb.co.uk



No TC, but 60bhp short of needing it...

FEATURE



GSX-R1000s have carved a groove in Cadwell over the years...

If there was ever a 1,000cc sportsbike bike that didn't require traction control, it's the Suzuki. 99.99 per cent of us aren't graced with the throttle skills of Simon Crafar, yet that stat is irrelevant aboard the Gixer. It's almost as if the rear wheel is digging into the surface beneath.

The Thou's long gearing proved beneficial at Cadwell. It was never between gears and even if the needle dropped worryingly low the abundance of grunt rescued the job. It also meant less upshifting, which consequently helped mask the lack of quickshifter, never mind an auto-blipper...

Regardless of the additional exercise required, the Gixer is hardly a physical workout – even round Cadwell. Its weight or size is never a concern, although like its smallest sibling, the Thou' is bereft of true modern sharpness. There's a friendly flex about the chassis and a feeling of complete resoluteness, no matter how much you ask from it. In comparison with 2015's finest, the GSX-R brags a very long, relaxed stance that makes you question its athleticism, yet it keeps on giving.

As the tyres engaged enough heat to push on, I upped the pace and easily fell into a Gixer-inspired rhythm. Fifth gear pinned, I grabbed the brakes as we attacked Park corner. A momentary period of satisfying braking power, then... nothing. The lever came back to the bar as if the pads had fallen out and I was heading for Park way too fast before finally some welcoming stopping power returned. The ABS had spat its dummy and decided I was asking



Flash boys...

TECHNICAL Suzuki GSX-R1000



ENGINE	Type	999cc, I/C, 16v DOHC, inline four
	Bore x Stroke	74.5 x 57.3mm
	Compression	12.9:1
	Fuelling	SDTV EFI
	Tested Power	156.7bhp @ 11,750rpm
CHASSIS	Tested Torque	102.6Nm @ 10,000rpm
	Frame	Aluminium twin spar
	Front Suspension	43mm Showa BPF, fully adj
	Rear Suspension	Showa monoshock, fully adj
	Front Brakes	Four piston Brembos, 310mm discs
DIMENSIONS	Rear Brakes	Single piston Nissin caliper, 220mm disc
	Wheelbase	1,405mm
	Seat Height	810mm
	Dry Weight	203kg
	Fuel Capacity	17.5 litres
PRICE	Price	£10,599 (MotoGP colours and ABS £11,299)
	From	Suzuki GB www.suzuki-gb.co.uk

Verdict

8/10

Again, brilliant in isolation, but out-dated and starting to feel slow. Sublime chassis and brimming with grip...

- + GRUNT, CHASSIS, STABILITY, GRIP
- LOOKS, ABS, LOW TECH

Just ignore the last decade of development elsewhere...

Highlights

- Big daddy Gixer
- ABS option
- Brembos monos
- Showa BPFs
- 203kg
- 157bhp

→ TRACK	6
→ FAST ROAD	10
→ HOOLIGAN	8
→ NEW RIDER	3
→ DESIRABILITY	5





Sales Force:
YTD Gixer Sales
GSX-R600 **178**
GSX-R750 **272**
GSX-R1000 **314**

adjustability, toggle modes or a simple button to turn off the system, it makes the ABS-kitted GSX-R1000 near useless for trackdays.

An aspect that cannot be denied is the 1000's price. At a smidgen over £10k, it's a relative bargain – and that's before you've whispered sweet nothings into the dealer's ear.

It's no secret there's a GSX-R1000 ready for release next year. Considering its 30th anniversary timing, it makes you wonder whether or not the all-new bike has been ready for a while, yet put back into the factory when rival manufacturers have showcased superior machinery. Let's hope Suzuki's MotoGP success – or at least the bike's raw pace and promise shown this season – will translate into an end product me and you can

thrive on. And let's not forget that just 10 years ago, it was the GSX-R ruling the world.

So does size matter? Of course it does. If your missus says otherwise then she's lying. Choosing a 1,000cc bike isn't always just a simple case of egotistical willy-waving; given the (sometimes) easy-going nature of the litre bike clan, power is manageable, posing little threat to the chassis, and the good old adage 'the throttle works both ways' couldn't be more pertinent.

We're not suggesting jumping straight into the deep-end after scraping through your test, although 600s need constant abuse – on

both road and track – and the financially astute could also argue against value for money when considering these out-dated machines. Aside from Triumph who doesn't make a 'big' bike, manufacturers are focusing all of their development and channelling their entire budget on superbikes.

On the contrary, I'm constantly reminded of John Reynolds' asking me a few years ago why anyone would want a bike that bucks, weaves and slaps its way to oblivion, which is where the 750 comes to the fore and when none of the 600's flaws come to fruition. When we're talking GSX-R specifics, it's more involving than its bigger brother and doesn't lack the outright pace you'd imagine, and until Suzuki has unveiled the all-new Thou', we'd take the 750. 

GSX-R HISTORY: THE MISSES

The hits of the GSX-R are legion. We don't have to bang on about the K5 GSX-R1000, the original SRAD 750 or the iconic Slabby. But has Suzuki got it right every time? We think not and there are a few models from Suzuki that didn't quite hit the mark...

1986 GSX-R400

Suzuki had a hit at home on its hands with the little 400, easily beating the competition of the time. But despite improvements in power and weight, the shift to a single headlight was a controversial one, so much so that the following year the bike reverted back to the traditional two.



1989 GSX-R1100 K

The flagship of the Suzuki range, the big 1100, got a kicking for being bloated and not too partial on holding a line. Be it set-up or geometry issues, they were a bastard to ride fast, no more so on the Isle of Man, where a serious of crashes prompted big bikes to be banned.



1991 GSX-R750 M

Somehow, Suzuki managed to add another 15 kilos to the weight of the GSX-R750. When power was only upped by a solitary horsepower, the knives of the press were out. Despite other changes made, including the sleeker headlights, this wasn't a high point of the model range.



2007 GSX-R1000

Having been bowled over by the K5 version, we were all expecting something really special in the 2007 version of the Thou'. But emissions rules meant that the new bike felt strangled at anything below flat chat, and the necessity of running two exhaust pipes meant weight was up.



2008 GSX-R600

The outgoing bike was a belter, but the new bike hardly pushed things forward. It was at this point that we noticed the steam running out of Suzuki, with just a new subframe, lightly reworked bodywork and a fuel tank being all the sales staff had to sell it on...



A2 VS THE INTERMEDIATE GROUP

We know that A2 sportsbikes are an absolute hoot on the road, but can they hold their own on circuit against the hoards of seasoned riders on a trackday? We took the KTM RC390 and Yamaha YZF-R3 to Brands Hatch on a sunny trackday to find out...

WORDS: CARL 'PRETTY BOY' STEVENS
PICS: JONNY GAWLER



When looking at the cold facts on their spec sheets, this pair aren't a million miles apart. They're both A2 compliant with the aim of attracting riders both young and old, nervous or bold. Both bikes look to mimic their superbike brothers and, somewhat surprisingly, both don't look much out of place in a trackday paddock.

Side-by-side, the R3 looks bigger, with a stature suggesting there's a lump larger than the 321cc parallel-twin found in the spacious steel frame. The Yamaha also has visibly higher 'bars, coupled with a tank and ergonomics that look to promote a gentle ride more than a thrash around a track.

The KTM, on the other hand, appears to have a much more aggressive stance with elements borrowed from KTM's Moto3

machines; details such as lower bars mimicking clip-ons, coupled with a tiny tank and higher footpegs make it feel instantly at home on track, showing it's more supersport than super learner in comparison to the YZF-R3.

On the aforementioned sheet of specs, the KTM's motor has the upper hand as well, boasting a power to weight ratio of 0.24kw/kg (which technically exceeds the A2 limit, but this all changes when basing figures on wet weight instead of dry), compared to the R3's more modest 0.18kw/kg. This is the same story with torque – the KTM pushes out 34Nm to the Yamaha's 26Nm. The RC390 also comes with slightly bigger brake discs and a higher ground clearance, which should benefit hugely round Brands Indy. ♦





However, the R3 does have a few tricks up its sleeve to fight the brave fight, the first being that the engine feels incredibly smooth and the gearbox is demonstrably crisper than the KTM's – alongside the fact it was born from Yamaha's illustrious race background and shares the letters 'YZF-R' with the legendary big bikes. Surely it'll be no slouch? Time to get them out with the big boys!

The day began quietly with both bikes, unsurprisingly, passing the noise test with ease. I then retreated to paddock, where I tried use nature's tyre warmers (summer sun) to best effect, after ensuring the pressures were in the ballpark. Just because their output is small, it doesn't mean to say these checks should be overlooked.

Considering the variation of bikes spanning the pit lane, both the RC390 and the R3 both got a fair amount of attention, which is nice to note considering both are standard. There were a few sniggers to be had, but with previous experience racing a Kawasaki Ninja 250R with just 30bhp in my pocket, I know how much fun there is to be had with such small power at your disposal.

As instructed by Rootsy, my aim for the day was to survive in the intermediate group – and I knew that was a tough ask. I decided to take out the Yamaha first, based purely on its smoothness, to ease myself into the day. Lining up in pitlane around me was a whole

Highlights

- ▷ Big bike feel
- ▷ Two cylinders!
- ▷ Yam build quality
- ▷ Squint, it's an R6!
- ▷ 169kg (kerb)
- ▷ 35bhp
- **TRACK** 4
Fun, but a struggle
- **FAST ROAD** 7
At home on the roads
- **Hooligan** 2
Way too well behaved
- **NEW RIDER** 9
Too tall for all?
- **DESIRABILITY** 3
Braggs the looks...

Momentum is the name of the game here...

TECHNICAL Yamaha YZF-R3



ENGINE	Type 296cc, l/c, 4-stroke, DOHC, 4-valve twin Bore x Stroke 68.0 x 44.1 mm Compression 11.2:1 Fuelling Closed loop fuel injection system Tested Power 35bhp @ 9,000rpm Tested Torque 26Nm @ 6,750rpm
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CHASSIS	Frame Diamond frame Front Suspension KYB 41mm non-adjustable fork Rear Suspension KYB rear shock, preload adjustable Front Brakes Akebono two-piston caliper, 298mm disc Rear Brakes Akebono single piston caliper, 220mm disc
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DIMENSIONS	Wheelbase 1,380mm Rake/Trail 25 degrees/95mm Seat Height 780mm Kerb Weight 169kg Fuel Capacity 14 litres
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PRICE	Price: £4,799 From: www.yamaha-motor.eu/uk
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The low pegs make the bike almost idiot proof...



Here goes...

host of machines from brand new 1000s to race ready 400s, giving a good scope of the task ahead. I was determined not to be a mobile chicane all day long...

First impressions? The Yamaha picks up incredibly quickly, the throttle delivery is silky, and for the three sighting laps the R3 feels lithe and nimble. Coming from my 899 Panigale race bike, it takes a few laps to adjust to the high bars and low pegs as it feels almost too comfortable to be on track, which is very roomy for my 5'7" frame.

But straight away the difference in power compared to every other bike on track is visible; the Indy circuit at Brands-Hatch is like a bull ring, but the big capacity bikes still rip past the R3 like it's standing still. Until we arrive at a corner that is, where everyone seems to be backing off horrifically early. The small single disc set-up works well when given a load of

pressure, but the Yam's front does have a tendency to dive under the late, panicky stuff.

This isn't helped by the rear, which loves to kick about when slamming down the gearbox. The main issue with the Yamaha, however, is ground clearance; the pegs dig in everywhere when it feels like the tyre could take more lean, which holds the R3 back where it should be making hay.

But one session under my belt and I wasn't black-flagged! I didn't cause an accident and the Yamaha put up a good show. It's so easy and comfy to throw about, but with the obvious drawbacks I was beyond excited to give the RC390 a decent spanking. ■

ENGINE Yamaha has designed an bigger 321cc liquid cooled lump to fit in the little R3 based loosely on the R25 that was available in Asian markets from 2013. Using offset cylinders (like on the CBR300), bore was increased by 8mm to 68mm to reach the capacity. Engineers were able to fit it with some snazzy features such as forged pistons, carburised con rods and a 180 degree crank design, all in order to give it a good balance between low and (relatively) high speed riding while keeping it smooth to suit the learning class.

CHASSIS The frame is also another all new design from Yamaha, which is said to have genes stolen from its big brother, although this is barely noticeable. Manufactured from high quality steel tubing, the wheelbase is similar to that of the R6, but that's where the similarities stop and the feeling becomes completely different. This is because Yamaha have blessed it with a 50/50 front/rear weight distribution and soft, smooth telescopic KYB forks – ultimately aiming for a comfy ride over a do or die race bike-esque wannabe.

Verdict

6/10

A neat little package, perfect for a first bike and oozing Yamaha build quality. Think of it as the safer option...

+ LOOKS, ROOMY, WELL BUILT, SMOOTH RIDE.

- NOT A TRACK HACK, SOFT SET-UP, GROUND CLEARANCE

*Separated at birth?
The R3 and an R6 at play*



Tucking good fun!



Firing up the KTM, the fancier digital dash jumps into life and the engine gives off a gorgeous and individual note. The RC390 feels completely different to the Yamaha, with a smaller tank, higher pegs and lower bars, which really feels nice to tuck behind and corner with as you start to string some laps together. The power delivery isn't quite as linear as the Yamaha's, but it's still responsive, and it hits the redline in a flash, meaning that you really need to nail each gear – when you get it right and barely interrupt your momentum I reckon it's one of the most rewarding bikes I've ridden.

Where the Yamaha seems to be in between gears in a few corners the KTM is able to pick up a lot faster, which surprised me as my pace was ultimately faster and the RC390 was starting to pull off overtakes on a number of bigger bikes – yes, overtakes! Even when really pushing the KTM, the stock WP suspension holds up stoically and offers a fair bit of support and feedback, which is a nice touch for any rider's confidence.

However, it wasn't all plain sailing. It was still a struggle down the straights compared to every other bike on track – and I mean every – and even with me weighing just under 10 stone, as soon as you're out of a corner the little RC390 just gets eaten alive. A bit of extra power would again make all the difference, but the little KTM still holds its own admirably in the intermediate group.

Another session on each bike illuminates how different they both are; the R3 feels a lot more limited on corner entry and mid corner, and the back end likes to step out of line a bit just when you start getting aggressive with it, but the little Yam will put an absolutely massive smile on your face. With the lower power to weight ratio, it feels planted and easy to turn on corner exit, the throttle and gearbox is silky smooth and these traits give it a big bike feel for little bike money. In this group, it was out of its depth, but not by as much as you'd think.

However, the KTM seems to feel so much more at home here. It's an absolute breeze to carry heaps more corner speed and the revs still pick up quickly; this means you can run higher gears with no trouble at all and the little RC can be thrown into corners like I can only imagine a Moto3 bike feels. Even though the chassis is just a slightly modified version of the 390 Duke, it feels like enough has been done to it, and with its compact design and aggressive nature it's also a lot easier to get fully tucked in and hang off, which, with my racer hat on, I absolutely love.

At lunch we took them both out on the roads for a little ride to keep my eye in, and both bikes continued to generate positivity through the little lanes. It was a nice little break for them both being completely honest, and taking a step away from the intensity of track work, the pair make perfect transport to and from a circuit (or office) of your choosing.

This is vitally important as it is this trait that fulfils their A2 status. The comfy Yamaha actually felt better on the bumpy back roads around Brands, with loads of support and a lot of feeling while cruising, while the RC390 felt more at home being absolutely spanked – that probably says more about the brands themselves rather than the bikes...

After refuelling both myself and the bikes, the afternoon sessions beckoned with dark clouds ominously gathering above. Back at the fuel station, I noted that both bikes offer great fuel efficiency, and with the lack of power the tyres will last loads longer than anything with a bundle of power. This is another reason why they make great trackday



ENGINE Taken from the existing the Duke 390, the little single cylinder 373cc lump is the hardest hitter of the two engines. It also weighs a minuscule 36kg, thanks to its compact design and stacked transmission shafts, which is a trick design feature. Couple this with a forged piston and power-promoting body-evacuation tech and you have a nice hit of punch and the highest powered bike in the A2 category; for less weight than your average scrawny teenager. Could definitely do with the Akrapovic slip on for a bit more growl, mind.

CHASSIS The lightweight steel trellis frame is another element that KTM has stolen from the little 390 Duke. Small modifications, such as increasing the head angle, means that the RC has higher ground clearance, shorter wheelbase and a shorter trail – all assets that are perfect on track or for throwing about on the road. Combine this with chunky upside forks from WP (as chunky as the RC8 R's in fact) and a light alloy swingarm and you can see why this bike feels at home absolutely everywhere. Metzeler M5s are a bonus.

Next stop? Moto3!



Corner over, advantage over...

**Verdict****8/10**

Style and substance combined being beautifully aggressive and the most powerful bike in the A2 category. Win win.

- + **THE FASTEST BIKE A TEENAGER OF 2015 CAN OWN, WITH ADDED SASSINESS AND 1000CC KILLING POWERS**
- **NOT THE MOST COMFORTABLE ROAD BIKE EVER BUILT.**

bikes, as it won't cost heaps of money to have loads of fun and you don't need a massive amount kit to run them; water, food, fuel, a tyre pressure gauge and pump will do (or hope someone will be on hand to borrow stuff if you forget, like I did...).

Used to sticky race tyres, I wasn't expecting much from the stock rubber, but I was proved wrong – to a degree. Being the control tyre for the KTM Cup I was expecting that the Metzeler Sportec M5s would hold up pretty well, and they didn't disappoint. They give an honest amount of feeling for what is essentially a standard road going profile and compound. It never felt like they were struggling and handled being pushed with only a few little moments on the front tyre at full lean, but still offering great feedback.

They felt better than the Michelin Pilot Street tyre found on the R3. These struggled when the pace was upped and lean angles increased, with little feel especially at the front end. Although it felt that there was more angle left in 'em the low ground clearance saves the day and stops you from going too far. The edge grip was really lacking compared to the Metzelers. For anyone worried about track riding on road tyres, both sets were still durable enough to commit to a few overtakes.

So rather than procrastinate or assume A2 sportsbikes simply won't hack it on track, anyone lucky enough to own one should get down to their local circuit and give your bike a good spanking.

It's educational, honest, and so interesting to see how much you can get away with too. For example, I was following a brand new R1, you know, the £15k one with 180bhp,

Highlights

- Sharp looks
- Jazzy digi dash
- WP suzzies
- Decent upgrades
- 154kg (kerb)
- 41bhp

TRACK

Fast, yet slow...

7**FAST ROAD**

Perfect to thrash about

7**HOOLIGAN**

Hard to wheelie

4**NEW RIDER**

I'm in Moto3!

9**DESIRABILITY**

Killer KTM looks

6**TECHNICAL** KTM RC390:

ENGINE	Type	373cc, I/c, DOHC single
	Bore x Stroke	89 x 60mm
	Compression	12.6:1
	Fuelling	Electronic fuel injection
	Tested Power	41bhp @ 10,700rpm
	Tested Torque	34Nm @ 9,250rpm

CHASSIS	Frame	Steel trellis
	Front Suspension	WP Monoshock, preload adjustable
	Rear Suspension	WP rear shock, preload adjustable
	Front Brakes	Four piston radial caliper, 300mm disc
	Rear Brakes	Single piston floating caliper, 230mm disc

DIMENSIONS	Wheelbase	1,340mm
	Rake/Trail	25 degrees/100mm
	Seat Height	820mm
	Kerb Weight	154kg
	Fuel Capacity	11 litres

PRICE	Price: £4,998
From	www.ktm.co.uk

POWER AND TORQUE



RACING INTENT

It's worth noting that KTM's RC390 has its own official race series in America, Germany and the United Kingdom; the latter being the Santander Consumer Finance KTM Cup that runs alongside the MCE British Superbike Championship with great success. These bikes are pretty much stock and made for upcoming riders under the age of 18, and there are also rumours of a Yamaha R3 cup emerging although this hasn't materialised just yet... More details from the KTM Cup can be found at www.ktmrccup.com

"I RACE 'EM!"

Reece Guyett – Santander Consumer Finance KTM Cup rider

"I absolutely love the KTM RC390. What we ride isn't far from the standard road bike to be honest. We have different fairings, a new exhaust system, WP suspension and a throttle stop, which works to keep all of the bikes and the racing as equal as possible. They are absolutely great fun to ride and handle really well – once they are set-up properly, anyway! The brakes are also incredible considering they are stock and the Metzeler Sportec M5's hold up brilliantly, even when we have to use them in the wet. There were some teething problems at the start but I absolutely love the thing now!"



THANKS TO: A big thanks to MSV Trackdays for letting us loose on track and not flagging us in. Operating at Brands Hatch, Snetterton, Oulton Park, Cadwell Park and Bedford Autodrome. The atmosphere in the paddock is a friendly and relaxed one while they have an extensive range of dates throughout the year. You can catch them on 0843 453 3000...

**Hmm, wax or gel,
wax or gel?**

and it's not until the rider had it fully upright that he started to pull some distance on me. This meant that from the apex at Druids I wasn't losing any time at all until we got right to the edge of the kerb.

It's a real eye-opener to ride these bikes hard as it highlights how power is often wasted. At the end of the day it's that big lump of meat on top that makes much of the difference. Both are masses of fun on track and take much more precision and careful riding than you could ever imagine to ride fast, which makes them the perfect bike for anyone from a budding racer to a careful

beginner. You can learn more on a day on a low capacity bike than you ever could on a bigger machine, especially with electronics plastering over a rider's mistakes, and there is no more rewarding feeling than overtaking bikes with 150bhp more than you.

If you're all about the fun factor and putting a few noses out of joint, then by all means go out and buy one, as you won't stop smiling from wringing the neck of these little machines. For pure thrills the KTM does a better job at keeping up and overtaking – making it my weapon of choice if you want the best chance of nailing some big bikes and to almost mimic being on an old two stroke. The Yamaha did do itself justice, but was just a little too relaxed on track, although it was a much nicer ride on the roads.

Oh, and if you do find yourselves taking one of these out, don't take it to anywhere with a massive straight – no matter how cheap a day at Snetterton may be... 



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Screaming right out of the 'that's just daft' files, comes KTM's tiddler scrapping against Kawasaki's flagship behemoth - let battle commence!



WORDS: BENJAMIN J KUBAS
CRONIN PICS: GAWLER

As if putting an A2 bike up against a swarm of top flight sportsbikes in the intermediate group of a trackday isn't quite going far enough, we also decided to throw one up against the current sportsbike du jour, Kawasaki's supercharged H2.

Seeing as the KTM was by far the better (and most powerful) of the two A2 machines young Haircut 100 was thrapping at Brands Hatch, this was the one we set the daunting task of tackling 193bhp of pure awesomeness.

While many may argue that comparing this pair's specs is a pointless endeavour, I would disagree. Yes, the H2 makes 150bhp more than the KTM, a very big number indeed. But it also weighs the best part of 80kg more, which is likewise as huge. So venue is all important keeping those figures in consideration. Rocking up at Silverstone

would be a pointless exercise, for example.

To which end we headed to our little test track of Llandow. It may only be slightly less than a mile long, but it has several fiddly bits which will suit the KTM, and a couple of long enough straights to keep the H2 in the game.

Being honest, the thought of having to push an H2 hard around Llandow gives me the shivers before even swinging a leg. The H2's belligerent throttle response alone makes me wonder if beating the KTM is as easy as it sounds. Add to that the fact that Rootsy is riding the RC390 (hardly a slouch), and this is a contest that could go to the wire. Shit, if I lose this I'll never, ever, live it down...

We banged in some practice laps first to give us an indication of what we were dealing with. Annoyingly, Rootsy was fast from the off, whereas the H2 took a little learning. The chicane sector in particular being where the 240-odd kilos of the beast were tough to sling from side, to side, to side, and then to its side

once again. Plus, the throttle was proper snatty in the gear I wanted to use through there. Going one higher was much smoother, but then drive would slightly suffer. Worse still, was that engine-braking when fully closing the gasser at lean was so severe that it would compress the fork, dropping the nose and it felt every time like I was about to crash.

The speed it was generating meant approaching some of Llandow's corners at a pace I'd never encountered before, which was a sobering experience. By contrast, Rootsy was laughing his head off after every session. At least one of us was having a great time...

Despite all this, the H2 was still faster on an overall lap. So, we did some rough maths and worked out an appropriate handicap for the wee KTM. With lap times around the 47sec mark for the H2, and 52sec for the KTM, between five and six seconds should theoretically see us cross the line at the same time. Bollocks to that, I want to win!



A little perspective pumps up the KTM's presence...



ROOTSY'S OPINION

It was always a forlorn hope, trying to battle Goliath with only a David-like armoury on my side. But that's not to say that the lil' RC390 didn't teach me a thing or two in the process. Cock-on in the nadgery stuff, and able to almost achieve the same speeds at the apex of the faster corners, it's only the straights where the KTM loses out – alright, gets destroyed. But the straights are the boring bits, aren't they? I live for corners, and the bits that connect them up are what's important. I get the same rush kneedown on the KTM as BJ did on the H2, and all for a fifth of the price and a hundredth of the stress. So what's irrelevant here? The RC390 for being under powered or the H2 for being overly expensive? Ultimately, I think I got the better deal, having a blast on the KTM and then laughing my head off watching BJ wrestle the H2 round Llandow, smearing Bridgestone halfway down each straight, and then watching him trying to cope with his post traumatic stress after the session...

Creating our own start/finish point, it was time for action and Simon pottered off sounding (though not looking) like the world's fastest lawnmower. Snapper Jonny was waiting to set me off as I watched Rootsy tackle the chicane section. By the time he dropped the flag he was nearly out of sight.

A wickedly fast start is curtailed almost immediately by the chicanes; left, right, left and right. The H2, while not exactly like a shopping trolley, was hard work to flop through them. As any setting other than the very lowest for the traction-control curbed drive too much, setting it on '1' it meant that the bike would spin, and exiting the tight right to start the faster part of the course the H2 scrabbles for grip, alternately sliding and stuttering on the TC in equal measure. Scary, and I still can't see Rootsy.

Accelerate hard in second gear, click to third and taking the fast right onto the back straight, the H2 slides again as I tap the

power, but it's still a great drive and we're scorching onto the straight. Which is when it wheelies in third, and continues in fourth.

Now, not long ago I watched Ian Hutchinson talking about how at the North West 200 he was doing 200mph but with the bars turned full lock due to severe wind. I was agog at this statement, who wouldn't be? But a nasty side wind had picked up earlier, and there I was flashing down the straight, wheel in the air, flat chat with the bars turned fully to the left to keep her straight. I now have a tiny inkling of what Hutchy was talking about, just minus his skills to deal with it.

But, there's Rootsy traversing the back chicane! I then notice the speedo is north of 140mph, a figure I've never seen before at Llandow. I somehow manage to drop the wayward front and stop it squirming like mad just in time to take the chicane, then I'm driving out harder than I have done all day, plastering Bridgestone on the Welsh Tarmac

and not feeling quite in control, if it all.

Approaching the final turn, Rootsy is already on his way out, so I dive in without fully closing the gas so I don't wash the front out, and get back on it earlier than ever. The H2 is bucking now, but the KTM is a hundred yards in front and reversing to me fast.

The sheer difference in speed that was then displayed was utterly remarkable, in fact at one point I thought I was going to ram him and we'd both cross the line in a blaze of orange and silver-green fireballs. Swerving just in time I blasted past before the finish, the H2's front pawing in the air in victory.

I'd won, just, but the experiences we individually experienced couldn't have been more different, even if we were both buzzing. And the elation of winning was ultimately shaded by the fact I'd just got away with something that could have been rather messy. So with my heart still trying its best to burst through my chest, it was time for a lie down.

See ya, sucker!



WORDS: JON 'JP' PEARSON PICS: JOE DICK

BRAKING

The first in a series of riding features aimed at giving you the confidence to master your bike better this month looks at the arresting art of hauling on the stoppers...

One huge hurdle in your biking life that you have to surmount is to trust the front tyre more and brake harder. If you want to go faster along your favourite road or lop those lap times at a trackday, or while racing, then you need to be on the gas for longer and on the brakes less. Simple.

Simple it may be, but it can also be pants-soilingly scary, which is why a bit of a sit down with your old mate Fast Bikes before you go out and give it a practice can help you become a better rider. But before you think that we're about to jump in the deep end, this feature is very definitely about helping you have more confidence to use your brakes better and not about frightening yourself daft and haring into corners too quickly. This isn't about braking when you see God or ending up in a hedge. We want you to have your brakes on and off at the right times and use them to their maximum by applying them for the minimum amount of time.

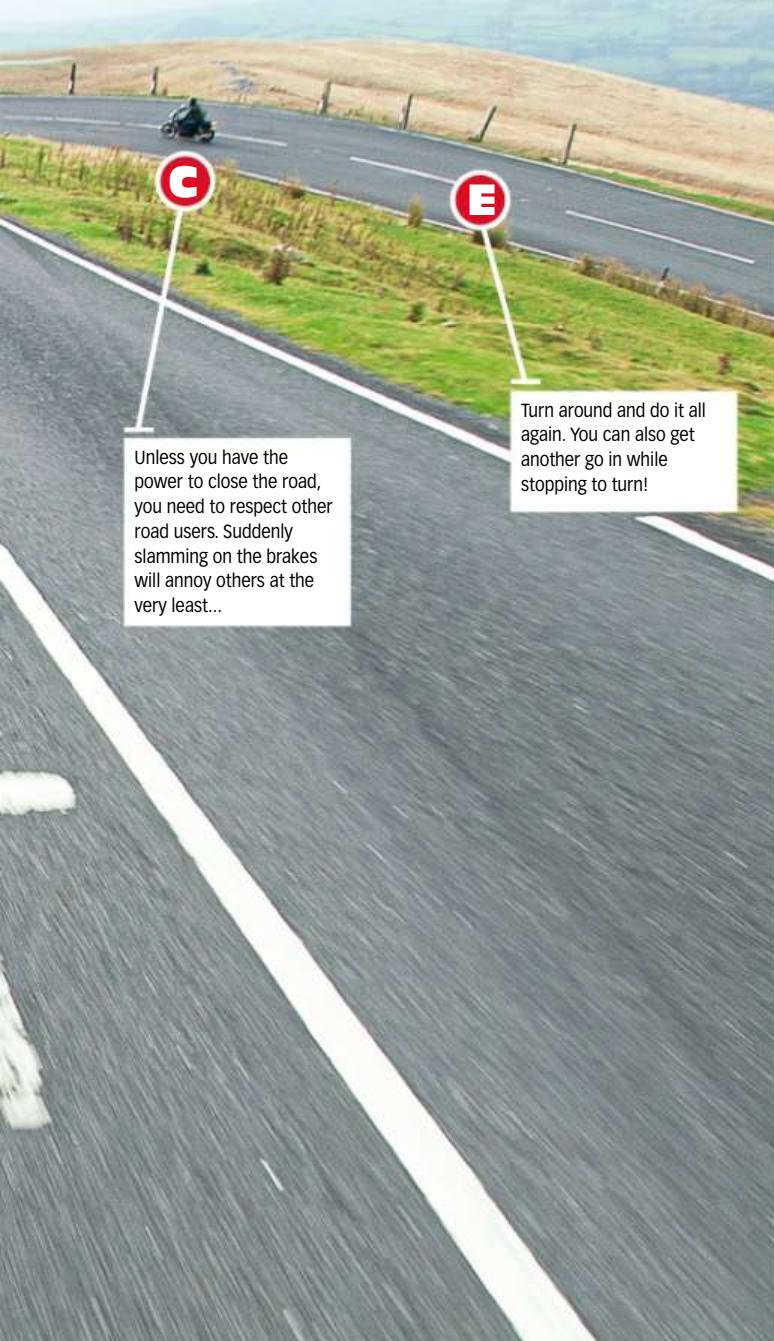
This feature is a hands-on one, designed to be useful and practical enough to have a read, go out for a ride, practice, get a brew in, have another read and practice some more to try and get your braking better. The likes of Tom Sykes is excused from this, but for everyone else there's something to be gained by working on your braking control.







The TT is an interesting case of how you can play with your braking markers. Coming in to Creg-Ny-Baa from the top of the mountain sees riders build some serious speed, speed that needs to be significantly scrubbed off for the Creg. Riders will have a braking marker, but they also need to take into account things like wind speed, which can alter things drastically. No-one at the TT wants to brake too early and then gas it up to the corner, but here we see Luis Carreira showing us how not to do it in 2010, misjudging his braking marker but having a soft landing after it went pear shaped...

***That's the way to do it!***

1 Think of the corner as a whole, ride it till you're happy with every part of braking, turning in, apex and getting on the power to corner exit point. Don't forget to look where you're going.

2 Point A is your braking point. Initially it is the spot you're comfortable applying the brakes at. Point B is where you're letting off the brakes and turning in to the corner. Both these points are guides and in reality need

to be YOUR points. Define them in your mind or use physical markers like a curbstone, dandelion or dead rabbit (make sure it's not a live one).

3 Before you start trying to brake harder and later (by moving point A in towards the corner) try the opposite and move point B backwards towards A. Doing that will make you use the brake lever harder for a shorter period of time but means you're braking safely in

an upright position and in a straight line. It'll also still leave your 'old' point B where it was (for peace of mind).

4 When you're happy with 1, 2 and 3 then, and only then, start to play with moving that braking area (A and B) as a whole closer to the corner. And that's the trick: bring B towards A to shorten the gap, get happy, then move both together towards the apex bit by bit, always within your comfort zone.

The Rules

Rule number one is to not overstep your marks. If you're into the idea of trying to improve your riding then at some point you've got to dare yourself to brake a bit harder and bit later. But only do this when you're comfortable with the idea, your bike and the corner. It's easy to get tensed-up, try too hard at the wrong point, turn in too soon, out-brake yourself – or worse – so get those things right first. We want no stress and no mess – of either your bike's bodywork or in your own pants.

Rule number two is to be happy with the corner or corners you choose. Don't let practicing this technique affect your line. You still need to be in the right place in the corner; turn-in at the same point, hit the same apex, carry the same line through and get on the gas at the same point to exit the corner. Those

things need to be fixed, cast-iron, consistent and nailed down hard before you start trying anything with your braking. If you're trying to work on one area of your riding then all other aspects need to come easy to you. The only 'extra' bit of brain power needs to go on the braking technique – it shouldn't mean every other aspect of the corner suddenly becomes harder or a danger.

Hard on for less time

This isn't an advert for Viagra but rather a riding technique. Or maybe it's both. But regarding the latter, use the illustration above to help you get it right in your head firstly, but really the point is to help you learn that braking harder is possible and no big issue. You'll see (very quickly, we hope) you can brake harder than you think and still arrive at a corner at the same speed, in control.

Yes, we're talking about braking harder and later into corners but we're not saying you need to brake right up to an apex. This isn't about winning races but learning to use brakes harder, safely.

Braking hard early, while you're still upright in a straight line will keep you hitting the apex and staying on line all the way through the corner. As confidence grows the gap between letting off the brakes and the apex gets longer – at which point a light bulb will pop in your head and you'll want to do something about the yawning gap that has appeared.

That's the time to move your braking markers (points A and B on the illustration) towards the corner. Not by much, three or five metres say, whatever you're comfortable with. The aim should be to remain in control but help you prove to yourself you can hold the throttle on for longer approaching corners.



Make your braking marker red, white or green

with the same control, but then be on the brakes meaningfully for a shorter period of time. You don't have to do this all the time, it's not about making you the last of the late brakers on the way to Tescos but to give you confidence.

As ever practicing is best done on a corner you know well, are confident with and can ideally repeat the technique multiple times to help yourself get better at it. Trackdays naturally provide a great opportunity.

Ask nicely, play hard.

Braking harder doesn't mean grabbing handfuls of brake lever suddenly. We'll give you big red X on your score sheet if you do that and likely so will your front tyre. Remember, when you brake you cause the forks to compress and the front tyre contact patch to take extra load. Asking nicely gives the forks just a bit more time to chow down on the front tyre's contact patch and introduce pressure slightly more progressively, which helps it hold the road. Give that front tyre a chance to get used to the idea then give it the beans on the Brembos (other brake manufacturers are available).

We're only talking fractions of a second difference in how you use the front brake lever here but try to imagine a transition period of the brake lever between off and pulled hard on. In short, don't suddenly ask for instant full pressure but take a fraction of a second longer to introduce that full pressure.

Two fingers is enough.

How many fingers? Good question. When it comes to braking on bikes, some motorcycle riding instruction will tell you to use four fingers on the lever. This is horseshit. Not least because it only leaves you with a thumb holding on to the bars and supporting your

We're not looking for Micky van der Mark levels of braking here...



JP on the Fireblade suddenly looks a bit handy...

whole upper body weight as you brake with full force into the corner. But also it is completely unnecessary. Modern brakes are incredibly powerful, particularly on sportsbikes, but in reality brake systems are strong on anything built this side of China – and even some dirt cheap bikes have decent brakes. The point is two fingers on the lever is plenty. Check out Shakey Byrne, Jonathan Rea or Marc Marquez braking hard into a corner and none of them has a fist all over the lever. Marquez, for example, is more often than not using one finger.

MotoGP's carbon brakes, priced as much as a fairly flash car, are damned good, of course, the best there are, but the power they put to the brake discs is not a long way removed from that which your standard, S 1000 RR/Fireblade/R6 can muster.

There are many factors involved but in short modern radial, monoblock brakes are feckin' awesome so use them and don't overdo it on the finger front. So, in short, think Twix, not KitKat.



A track is a brilliant place to focus and practice...

That's a bit more like it...





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GETTING YOUR BACK UP

Stunt Asylum has built a new rig to teach riders how to pull a rolling stoppie in a safe and controlled manner. We sent Charlie, our resident non-stunter, along to try and break it...

So let me get this straight. You want me to accelerate hard for 25 metres, then whack on the front brake, force the tank upwards with my thighs and roll a further 12 metres on the front wheel with the bike's back wheel dangling a foot in the air?

My initial reaction to this request was that Nick Straughan (who goes by the stage name of Storm) of Stunt Asylum had bitten off a bit more than he could chew with me...

Ever since Roots had forwarded me the invitation containing the words 'you in?' I wondered what my unthinking acceptance had got me into. However, this was not my first experience of the Stunt Asylum. In 2012 my fear of wheelies was successfully banished at what was then known as learn2wheelie (check out issue 283 for the feature). Nick changed the company name shortly after as he had far more skills to offer a stunt hungry public, with experience that reaches over a decade in the business.

The decision to learn something, in Nick's words, 'safer than hooning around the roads' has led to various trophies for freestyle stunting, a first place in the Last Man Standing event (a kind of demolition derby while in a 'highchair'), and a runners-up spot in last year's British stunt championships. You may also have seen him outside the Bushy's tent during TT weeks or doing BSB and Ace Cafe shows – as well as many more events that give an adrenaline filled audience their fill of thrills. And now it's my turn to emulate Nick's feats. I'm out of my comfort zone even more than I was at the wheelie school...

The stoppie element of the school has been around for a while, but has taken time to gather momentum as the service offered previously had to be on your own bike, which put many punters off. Despite my knowledge of Nick and his team's coaching abilities, that offer would still have put a cold shiver up my

spine, so a bike needed to be built fit for purpose. Much like the California Superbike School brigade built a slide rig for pupils to spin it up in safety, Nick got the spanners out in true A-Team style to build something suitable for the stunt.

The key thing for a stoppie 'rig' was that it had to feel like a normal bike, so that a safe environment could teach the student what an actual stoppie felt like – not just a simulated one. Thus 18 months of designing, building, testing, crashing, redesigning, strengthening, testing and crashing again resulted in the Stoppie Bike. I should add here that the crashing was deliberate, so that Nick and fellow Asylum instructor Adam collected all the bruises first...

The bike may look cumbersome, difficult to turn and to ride, but its looks are deceiving and as you pull away on what was once a standard Yamaha Fazer 600 you almost forget what surrounds you. It's good to know that you're safe from a flip, a front wheel skid or the back end swinging out of control. These were scenarios that all three of us students experienced on the day – and are the issues the school also addresses in the real world.

In true pick-on-the-journo style, I was first up on the stoppie bike. This was despite one of my fellow student stunters, Marc, impressively making the most of Dunsfold Park's private runway by wheelieing back and forth to the toilet. The other learner was Cassie, a trainee stunter who already knew her way around a stunt bike and brought her own along just for good measure.

My first couple of runs were to get the feel for the Fazer, running in an extended figure of eight pattern with the runway in between. Three cones marked out a 25 metre run, 10 metre braking zone and another 25 metres for the return journey. The drill was to accelerate to the first cone, roll off and then brake

WORDS: CHARLES 'CHARLIE CHARLES' OAKMAN
PICS: AS DESIGN







smoothly, but firmly, before coming to a complete stop. Within three passes the back went light, my body lurched forward and I had pulled my first stoppie. Woo yeah!

With this under my belt, it was now time to 'pop'. This is the action necessary to get your knees into and under the tank, to bring the bike up with you at the opportune moment when the deceleration and braking lightens the rear in the appropriate fashion.

I thought to myself that this 'pop' would be made a lot easier had the tank sported some extra grip of some kind on the sides, so asked why this was omitted. Constantly rubbing your legs up against this sort of material will really damage the skin, I'm told, especially (if like me) you wear Kevlar jeans of some description. I had checked beforehand on what to wear and as long as the essentials were covered (jacket, gloves and helmet) they are pretty relaxed. I added my Knox track vest to this, whereas Marc was in full zipped leathers and Cassie in a Dainese action vest and knee guards.

Things were really beginning to gel, I was already lining up bookings for my shows, but my enthusiasm for the stunt soon got the better of me. On my next run I rolled off the gasser and, as opposed to catching the shocks with the brake whilst fully compressed, I had allowed them to start decompressing. A front wheel skid started, the Maxxis tyres screeched, and a puff of blue smoke rose up after my low side skid. And then engine stalled. What a hero...

I was a bit shocked as I'd been walking it up until that point. But I was quickly back upright and ready to go again. This was not the last time this happened, but thankfully it was the final time I stalled or lost control

afterwards. Nick talked me through the situation, telling me to release the brake as soon as I felt this happening, which I did, and within a few runs I was back to lifting large ones as the rear bar was raised higher and we started rolling further. By lunchtime, some five sessions in, I had rolled a stoppie some 13 metres, exceeding all of my own expectations (and us – everyone that knows Charlie). When the rear bar was raised to its highest point it seemed ridiculous that I would be up anywhere near that far, but on one attempt I actually hit the safety bar with a massive thump. This was my 'would have





Despite the offer of an extra £50, the designers failed to Mac out the rig...

flipped' moment, braking too hard with the additional speed I was employing with every run. Funny enough, my excuse that I was just testing the rig didn't hold any sway with Nick! We were, however, heading closer to the inevitable point where the 675 would be called into action.

This was not sitting well with me. My friends at Triumph have equipped me with a 675 Daytona for the season, but at no point did I hear that they were desperate for me to test how well it stopped. Accidents happen, of course, but on a runway south of Guildford? There could be tears. I needn't have worried, but did feel as if I'd been playing paintball in the morning as practice, in preparation to face ISIS in the afternoon...

Nick took control of my staffer first, as he does with all student bikes, making sure that they can do the job properly. Safe to say the Trumpet passed. But what about me?

My turn loomed and what followed were numerous unimpressive passes, with snapper Andy reluctantly raising his camera as nothing happened every time. A little dejected after my first run I had plenty of excuses lined up. I was even tempted to go back to the comfort of the rig. But then it suddenly clicked after a few reminders from Nick.

Growing a pair finally saw the 675's back wheel up in the air – rolling stoppie achieved! This may not be as far or as high as I had managed on the training bike but I had gone from nothing to rolling a metre high stoppie unaided in a day. That's a result!

So I came away with a new skill to practice (in a wisely chosen environment), and a lot of experience of different scenarios that relate directly to the road. I have never braked so hard at pace and it was a great demonstration of just how good the 675's brakes are. This can only help with my track based stopping distances – and if the bike is starting a brake-induced slide and losing the front, I now have had experience of saving it.

So it's not just about stunting and showing off, many of the skills and experiences are transferable elsewhere in my riding. But as I have been pretty much vertical in a stoppie now, I must keep it up and keep practicing to retain my skills and confidence.

It is a school, but one of the main things for Nick is maximising your enjoyment factor, as cheesy as that may sound. Believe me, it's a really good course that I loved every minute of. It was set at each student's own pace and by the end of the day all three of us on the course had improved our skills. We were in great hands, as you would most definitely be if you took the decision to pay Nick a visit. A round of applause guys, you've taught an old dog a brilliant new trick. 

WANNA GO?

The school is based at the Top Gear test track at Dunsfold, not a million miles from Guildford. Full or half day courses are available and courses are £240 a pop. Nick also offers the wheelie school too, at £200 a course. To book, head to www.stuntsylum.com



And they said this day would never happen. Success!

addiction

STEVE THOMAS'

DUCATI 1199 PANIGALE S

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Barrels of fun...

A Ducati only trackday at the full and fancy Silverstone circuit is the perfect place to hunt out some Italian bike porn. Amid the stock stuff, we picked out some seriously erection inducing machinery...

WORDS: ROOTSY
PICS: GIOVANNI GAWLER



PACKING IT IN

A rhapsody in yellow, there's more to this 748 than meets the eye – and said eye knows that there's a lot going on already. Think yellow Ducati, think 748, right? Well, you'd be right about this bike in terms of its chassis, but as you can see, things are rather busy under the hood. Somehow, an 1198 motor has been fitted in the frame along with a Nemesis traction control system – you know, just because. The list gets longer and more luscious, with K-Tech tweaked Öhlins suspension, Marvic wheels, a Corse swingarm, PT calipers, carbon absolutely everywhere and all manner of trick bits daubed over the bike. Looking utterly sublime, with or without its clothes on, this was one of the star attractions of the day – crazily conceived, beautifully built and a credit to man and marque alike.



THE MOTOGP REP

You can't beat a lovely Des, and seeing this in Silverstone's wild (as opposed to a plinth in the dining room) is a heartening sight. Even as standard, the Desmosedici RR lures you in and makes you gaze, lust and want it like no other machine. That the 1098r of the time is an easier bike to ride fast, or that the new 1299 Panigale is every bit as powerful makes no odds – this was the first MotoGP rep of the modern era and as such boasts huge respect. Outrageously stiff, stupendously loud and functionally pretty, we love it – and just hope that Bridgestone have enough 16 inch BT-01R tyres in stock to keep it on track for years to come...



FLYING THE FLAG

In 2007, Ducati offered JUST 110 Tricolore 1098S machines to the UK public, for two grand more than the 'standard' S. They all got snapped up. The red, white and green of the Italian national flag had been used on a few previous sportsbikes, most notably the 1985 750 F1 and then a limited edition 851, but in 1098S guise the colours are joined with the gold of Öhlins, in the form of a set of FG511 forks coated with titanium nitride forks, and a 46PRC shock for good measure. Brembo monoblocks debuted on the 1098, with the M4-34 calipers doing some serious biting. Owners also got a track only Termignoni exhaust kit with ECU to go with it, aptly sported here.





EMERGENCY NUMBER

Now slowly starting to crawl back into fashion, it took a brave man to plump for the 999 back in the day, even more so in black. Eschewing the traditional red, this 999S looks the business in said hue. Showing off its gruff Termignoni pipes, the Öhlins accoutrements and polished to perfection, this was a serious sleeper on the day, with only aficionados raising a discerning eyebrow.



MONSTER MASH

A day out on track with Ducatis wouldn't be the same without a sprinkling of sporty Monsters, and new and old alike joined in the fun at Silverstone. Not quite the pick of the bunch, but parked perfectly on the mirrored surface of a Silverstone garage, was this near pristine example. We say near, because on closer inspection we saw the tell-tale signs of action on the crash bung. And that's just the way we like it – it's not only chicks that dig scars...





I live on the circuit, so I don't even have to drive to work!

I live in the BRDC farmhouse, which is just off Farm curve opposite the Wing. I'm on the track everyday between 6.30am and 7am, supposedly for a track inspection, but I can't help myself and end up doing a few laps in a car or on the bike...

The BRDC board invited me to have a look back in September last year.

They were concerned over the way it was being run, and subsequently made some structural changes, trying to build a different culture into the business – a much more entrepreneurial culture, bit less corporate and more fun. We wanted to give people the power to make decisions and really put the fans at the heart of the business, which I don't think they were prior to that. We've got rid of the stupid ticket prices and the stupid prices around food – the days of the £10 burger are long gone. We've lowered ticket prices in the hope that more and more fans will come and support us.

I used to do trackdays.

I used to ride a Honda SP-1. I love my big v-twins, lots of engine braking! And in cars I used to rally when I was a kid, and was grasstracking at the age of eight years old. My particular bucket of talent for doing it professionally was a bit shallow, so I had to find my way in business.

Retail is my background.

I was executive director of marketing for the Co-op group, which is a £14bn business. My background is a marketing one, but the challenge when I came to Silverstone was applying some of that knowledge gained over 30-odd years to a race circuit. The team is doing a great job now.

I was really disappointed that we'd lost the GP in the first place.

I don't think we tried hard enough to keep it. When I came in, I made it my business to try and win it back. I didn't ever think we'd get it for 2015 because the deal was done with Donington Park, but there was always a chance thereafter. I got on planes to Spain and made myself known to the Circuit of Wales, did a lot of to-ing and fro-ing. We were determined to at least be in with a chance for the coming years.

The deal we've done...

...is to say that as long as Circuit of Wales has a contract with Dorna, and are unable to run it in Wales, the GP will be hosted at Silverstone. We've certainly got it for 2015 and 2016, possibly 2017 depending on how things go in Wales. What we've got to do now is really show the fans and Dorna what a great show we can put on at Silverstone. We want the fans of Britain, and Europe, to come and experience what we

INTERVIEW: AL FAGAN
PICS: SILVERSTONE, REPSOL MEDIA, BSB

TEN MINUTES WITH...

PATRICK ALLEN

Silverstone's new Managing Director talks about his love of bikes, daily lappery, and the British GP...



can offer. My ambition is to make Silverstone the benchmark for any MotoGP on the calendar. To do that, we need as many fans there as possible.

We have to make the circuit an appealing place to come.

We need to soften some of the areas we have at Silverstone, which can be more like a security-type atmosphere. I want to make it a real family destination to come to, not just for one weekend a year but every weekend of the year. Families don't always want to stand by the track and watch the racing. There has to be other things to do, so we've got a three-day festival going on this year – a funfair, bands, kids stuff, minimotos and a whole host of other activities and entertainment. Our product is entertainment, passion, excitement and fun, and not just about the black stuff that the bikes ride round on.

You pay £80 to watch Man Utd for 90 minutes.

And for the same money you can come to the GP for the whole weekend. When you compare what you pay to go to the football, watching MotoGP is relatively cheap at £70. The fundamental economics involve the cost of putting on a show. We are the promoters of the show, and there are sanction fees that have to be paid for Dorna, which isn't cheap. Marquees go up, all of the parking, traffic management and money that goes to all the other agencies result in a cost of putting on



Patrick Allen, left, getting a few trackday tips from Silverstone's staff

an event. The ticket price is aimed to cover those costs. For instance, we spend nearly £3m on temporary structures. But I still want to make it more affordable to true fans and not just the paddock club.

There was some Silverstone arrogance that had to go.

I think it's true to say that two wheels has never been given equal billing to four wheels, which is a sad thing. I think it's equally important that we look at Silverstone as a motor racing venue, and I don't care whether that's four wheels or two wheels. I just think there's been a bit of 'we are Silverstone', which is the way I see it. Maybe it's because I'm a blunt Yorkshireman, but I say it how it is. You think the fans don't already see that? The whole thing needs to be geared to what the fans want, and not just what the BRDC wants.

The first road bike I had was a Fizzy when I was 16.

Then I went to an old Honda CB250, which was a right old bus of a thing. From there I had a Kettle – fantastic thing, smoke billowing out. I had a break for a little while when the family came into play, then I had a ZX-9R. Purple headlight cover, it was a beautiful thing. I had various Hondas after that – CBRs, VFRs and an SP-1. I've just bought an immaculate 1990 CBR1000F. I don't know why I bought it, but a friend of mine owns Bradford Motorcycles and it was just sitting there. It was in such pristine condition and it was up for £2,500. 

NEXT MONTH



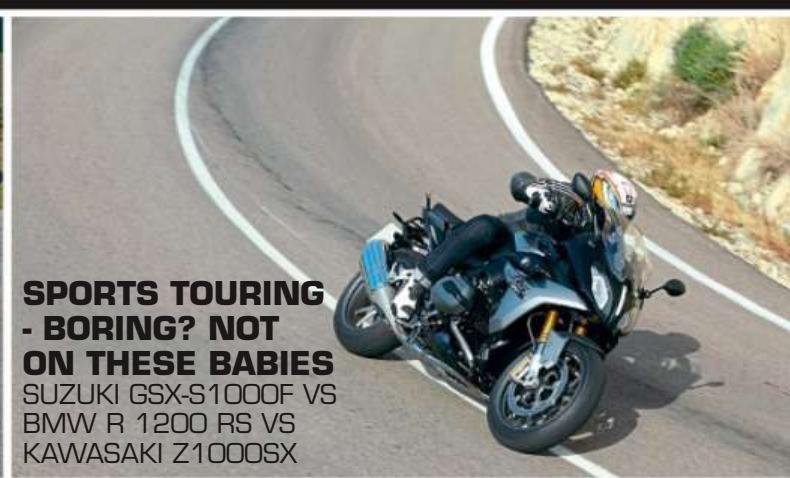
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BMW R 1200 RS VS
KAWASAKI Z1000SX



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'MotoGP DNA' Honda said. But did that make it any good?

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The last in our focus on manufacturers brings us to Y. Why? Because there are no big manufacturers beginning with Z!

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Tracks, tweaks and ting for the fleet this month!

► Yamaha YZF-R1 ► MV F3 800 ► Kawasaki ZX-10R

► Triumph 675 Daytona ► Suzuki GSX-S1000F ► Scrambler Ducati Icon

Used Bike Guide



In 2004 Honda finally spliced the Fireblade with some much needed MotoGP genes...

**The first
RCV inspired
BLADE**

2004/05 HONDA CBR1000RR FIREBLADE



It's amazing to think how far sportsbikes have evolved in the 11 years since 2004 heralded the resurgence of the litre bike class. If we'd known then what we do now, we'd have, quite simply, shit ourselves!

Traction control, angle sensitive ABS, semi-active suspension, 200bhp; this was the stuff of fantasies. Back in 2004 we were all blown away by the fact that we were seeing the fruits of MotoGP bike development eventually filtering down to road bikes. And no manufacturer liked to shout about this transition more than Honda – all with good cause, to be fair to the Big H.

By the end of 2003, Honda's MotoGP squad was flying high. A young Italian called Valentino Rossi was HRC's golden boy and had walked the first two MotoGP world titles on the dominant RC211V. True, the shine had been brushed off slightly by his shock announcement that he was going to leave and join bitter rivals Yamaha, but with 29 of the 32 MotoGP races so far won by an RCV, Honda was confident they could weather the storm.

History proved them wrong, but in 2004 all road riders cared about was the fact a brand new Fireblade was about to hit the streets – and it boasted technology taken from the RCV.

Honda, fairly understandably, wasn't exactly shy about



PRICE GUIDE: £3,400 – £5,000

Cheapest private: £3,400
25,500 miles, red/white/blue 2004 bike, very reluctant sale.

Our choice private: £3,999
Red bike with 14,984 miles in superb condition. Alarm fitted.

Cheapest dealer: £3,595
28,514 miles, Cat-D listing but a very clean example.

Our choice dealer: £3,900
12,146 miles, FSH in clean, original, condition.

Ex-demo: n/a

promoting this fact. OK, the brand new 998cc engine wasn't a V5 like the RCV's unit, but it was a ground-up new motor, made a claimed 170bhp and was housed in chassis that also borrowed MotoGP technology, such as the Unit Pro-link suspension. Add to

Look, MotoGP has just hit the highway. Or something...



FUEL-INJECTION

The fuel-injection system is pretty good on the 'Blade, but a Power Commander and a bit of careful set-up time makes it noticeably better as well as improving fuel economy. Annoyingly, you can't re-chip a 'Blade, so it's a PCIII for £130 or PCV for £335 for added finesse.

MODEL UPDATE

Although the 2006/7 'Blade is very similar, its different rear sprocket size, uprated brakes and sharper styled fairing help it both look and feel a more polished overall performer. Prices start at £4,000 and it is well worth considering if your budget allows.

FAIRING

The 'Blade's fairing is a nightmare to remove and has loads of those push clip plastic fasteners secreted in really awkward spots. Check it well for any signs of cracks due to it being forced and especially inspect the seat unit as this is prone to damage.

FINISH

Overall the finish is very good on the 'Blade, however owners do moan that the paint on the plastic tank cover area is quite thin and wears and scratches easily. If it's in good condition, invest in some clear protective tape to keep it this way.



With this funky (and bang on trend) underseat exhaust system, radial brakes, sharp styling and a chunky race-style swingarm and all looked good for the 'Blade. It even had some electronic wizardry in the shape of an electronic steering damper that varied its damping with the bike's speed. In 2004 that was properly trick, but sadly for Honda, it's wasn't all plain sailing for the brand new 'Blade.

No one could have predicted the leap forward in litre bike development that we saw in 2004 as alongside the Fireblade, Kawasaki unleashed the brutal ZX-10R and Yamaha the classy

YZF-R1. Both bikes claimed more power and lighter weight than the 'Blade, which wasn't really an issue as all the figures were made up anyway, but what really hit the 'Blade hard was the fact these rivals felt more engaging to ride.

Where Kawasaki had set out to thrill and Yamaha to impress through refinement, Honda played it far too safe with the Fireblade. Despite looking like an RCV with lights, to ride the 'Blade felt anything but an agile racer and that left riders bitterly disappointed. The new generation of litre bike fans wanted to be excited and feel like they were riding a bike with 170bhp, a

feeling you simply didn't get on board the Honda.

Super smooth motors have always been at the heart of Fireblade models, but the 2004 unit took this ethos a stage too far. Blighted by a horribly tall first gear, the 'Blade was sluggish to accelerate and felt weak in the low and mid-range when compared to its power-crazed rivals. It simply didn't cut the mustard and with litre bikes being sold on performance, this was a big issue for Honda. And so was the 'Blade's handling...

It's hard to be too critical of the 'Blade's chassis and set-up because it's a lovely bike to ride

with a typically assured and confidence inspiring feel that you get with a Honda, but it isn't exactly sporty. Well, not compared to its rivals. Where the likes of the Kawasaki brought supersport handling with superbike power to the table, the 'Blade turned up with composure and stability rather than outright agility. As a result it felt a little large and outdated. If you want neutral, consistent and predictable handling, the 'Blade is the bike for you. But if you want a sportsbike to make your heart pound, the 'Blade isn't going to do this. Well, not in stock trim...

The great thing about

FILTERS

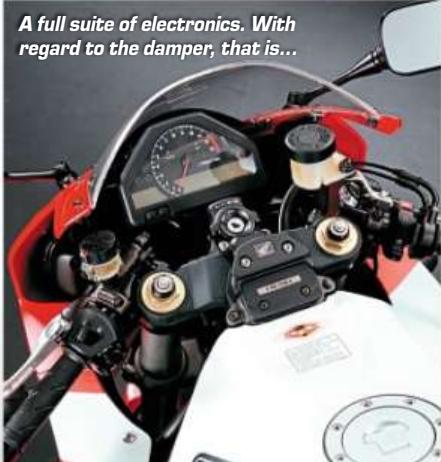
Everyone forgets the fuel filter, which is located within the 'Blade's tank and often gets blocked. A new filter costs pence and swapping it almost always releases a few long lost ponies.

BRAKES

The 2006/07 model has different specification Tokico calipers to the 2004/05 model and they are far better in term of performance. Keep an eye on eBay and treat yourself as they are a brilliant upgrade, especially when combined with a set of braided lines and some new pads.



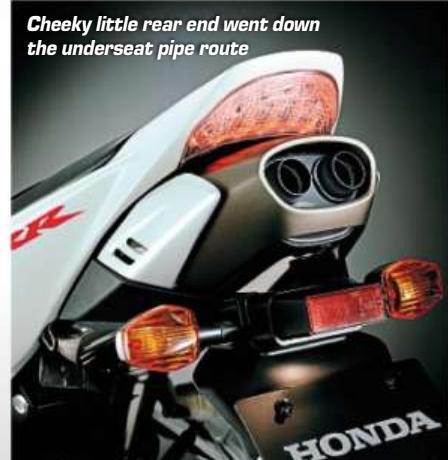
A full suite of electronics. With regard to the damper, that is...



Plush suspension, radial brakes, what more could you want?



Cheeky little rear end went down the underseat pipe route



ENGINE	Type Bore x stroke Compression Fueling Tested Power Tested Torque	998cc, liquid-cooled, 16v, inline four 75 x 56.5mm 11.9:1 Electronic fuel injection 154bhp @ 11,250rpm 108Nm @ 8,500rpm
---------------	--	--

CHASSIS	Frame F Suspension R suspension Front brakes Rear brake	Aluminium twin spar 43mm inverted Showa forks, fully-adjustable Monoshock, fully-adjustable Four-piston radial calipers, 310mm discs Two-piston caliper, 220mm disc
----------------	---	---

DIMENSIONS	Wheelbase Seat Height Dry Weight Fuel Capacity	1,410mm 820mm 179kg 18 litres
-------------------	---	--

SPEED	0-60 0-100 0-150 Stg ¼ mile Standing mile Top speed	3.76 sec 8.64 sec 11.81 sec 11.27sec @ 136.84mph n/a 175mph
--------------	--	--

H-VIX

Honda's exhaust valve is just as prone to seizure as Yamaha's EXUP is, so ensure it is opening and closing during its pre-ignition start up routine. Some owners remove it when they fit an aftermarket exhaust, which can cause an Fi warning light to illuminate. It is located on the vertical tube beside the shock absorber's top mount.

CAMCHAIN TENSIONER

Another irritation, rather than a major issue, is the 'Blade's camchain tensioner, which is known to fail with age. It starts as a rattle at low revs then increases in volume. A new unit costs less than £100 and is fairly simple to fit. Avoid manual tensioners as they need to be set correctly and tweaked with mileage.

GENERATOR

This is the 'Blade's only major weak point and annoyingly there is nothing you can really do to check it isn't going to let you down! When/if it does fail, a new unit costs £350 from Honda while a used one is closer to £100 on eBay. Specialist companies will re-wind your broken unit for around £120, which is the best option.

GEARING

This is absolutely essential to do on any 2004/05 Blade. The OE Honda rear sprocket is a 40-tooth unit, which was changed in the 2006/07 update to a 42-tooth unit to give the bike a bit more acceleration and remove its lethargic feel. Recreate this mod on the 2004/05 bike and you will be amazed at the transformation for under £30.

The sun set early on this model Fireblade, but it still offers a ride that oozes quality...



ALSO CONSIDER THESE:

KAWASAKI ZX-10R

Private
£4,200

Dealer
£4,500

Engine
Power
Torque

Even by today's standards the original ZX-10R feels a bit mad. The engine and handling are lively, but that all adds to the experience. A new shock makes the world of difference.

2004



YAMAHA YZF-R1

Private
£3,500

Dealer
£4,000

Engine
Power
Torque

A refined, yet still very capable, litre bike that looks glorious. It's not as wild as the competition, but arguably better for it and offers great value.

2004



SUZUKI GSX-R1000 K5

Private
£3,800

Dealer
£4,300

Engine
Power
Torque

It's a year later model, but the K5 (or K6) is one of the best GSX-R1000s ever built. A lovely bike with a beautiful, and gutsy, motor. Do it.

2005



RUNNING COSTS

Service interval:

Minor:	4,000m
Major:	8,000m
Valve clearances:	16,000m

Service costs:

Minor:	£170.00
Major:	£250.00
Valve clearances:	£500.00
Right fairing:	£219.99
RH Engine casing:	£149.99
Brake lever:	£19.86

The 2004/05 Fireblade is that it doesn't take a lot of work to uncover the bike that HRC wanted to build before someone in a white coat decided it was too exciting. A swap of sprockets adds some acceleration, jettisoning the heavy underseat exhaust for a lighter unit to alter the weight balance and speed up the handling and a bit of a suspension tweak removes even more of the lethargic feel. Do these modifications and you're left with a very, very accomplished used litre bike that is too often overlooked.

As well as having very few mechanical issues to worry about, and solid build quality, the Fireblade makes a really good road sportsbike. The riding position is sporty without being over the top, and once allowed to breath properly the motor rediscovers some of its lost midrange and the chassis is ideal for the UK's varied road surfaces.

If you are looking for a bike to ride and enjoy rather than save for sunny days, not only does the 2004/05 Fireblade's unpopularity make it the cheap option, it's also the best all-rounder of this defining era of sportsbikes.

Verdict 7/10

It's a case of close, but no cigar for the 'Blade in original trim. However, a few simple tweaks transform this plain Jane into something far more thrilling.

- + HANDLING, STABILITY, BUILD QUALITY
- WEIGHT, ACCELERATION, CHARACTER



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WORDS: ROOTSY PICS: FB ARCHIVE

BRAND OF BROTHERS YAMAHA

We end our manufacturer round up with a Yamaha round up...

The tuning fork brand has made some of the world's most important and iconic machines to date. From the likes of the Fizzy and RD250 and 350, right the way through to the likes of the TDR250 and RD500, then the epoch making 1998 YZF-R1, the back catalogue has been full of all killer, no filler. Since the turn of the millennium, however, Yamaha has found the going hard, with its Japanese rivals making the running in almost every class. So with bikes from the last 15-20 years you may not be buying the very best, but you're certainly getting a bike that's well and truly in the ballpark.



The 2012 R1 was a class act – in a rabid world...

2012 YZF-R1

WHY YOU NEED ONE: YOU WANT A STONKING ROAD BIKE, PACKED WITH TECH
PRICES: YOU CAN GET BRAND NEW BIKES FOR UNDER £10K

Often looked over because of a raft of really impressive rivals, the 2012 version of the R1 added a fantastic traction control system to the crossplane crank party. Even though the world was imploding at the time of the first cross cranker, it sold in very respectable numbers, with the tractable engine finding fans wanting something different from their Japanese inline four. Once its launch price of £9,999 went north, the Yammy's attraction waned a little – more so when the BMW S 1000 RR was released to rapturous acclaim in 2010...

The 2012 version received a new nose, longer shock and a new top yoke, answering the prayers of those who were clamouring for an easy-to-hand hazard light button (ie, no-one). But the big news was the six-stage TC system, featuring an anti-wheelie control in the two most intrusive settings. It's a cracking system, very refined and with discernible jumps between each level, even though it's not a gyro-based system. In fact, the R1 is a techno marvel with all sorts of acronyms denoting the high spec of electronic trickery. Sure, the whole package still couldn't compete with the Beemer in terms of outright pace, but the R1 was the most different of the Japanese alternatives, with the engine responsible for its huge character.

Why buy one now? Well, you won't be on the ragged edge on track because the R1 didn't go on the diet it needed to. It feels a big bike on the hoof, which is reassuring on certain roads, but a fundamental issue on track where the inherent width of the motor has caught out track riders from Josh Brookes down. It's fast, but never at the head of the queue, and to get decent power out of it needs some serious investment – cans ain't gonna cut it.

Another problem was the price. Released at £12,500, Yamaha kept putting the price up, meaning it was soon in Italian bike territory. Not that many saw a racetrack, with BMW and Kawasaki clearing up, so great examples are available. Even with miles on, typical Yamaha build quality means that they'll still retain their showroom sheen, with some also boasting some tasteful extras. It makes an amazing road bike, looks very pretty and has that character that so few Japanese bikes possess. Go get one, Tiger!

2006 YZF-R6

WHY: YOU GO GIDDY WITH REV'S

PRICES: WE'VE SEEN A FEW UNMOLESTED VERSIONS FOR AROUND £3,500



Rev heaven!

Not much has been done to the R6 since its move to super-sharp status way back in 2006. The marque has always been at the more focussed edge of the spectrum, but the radical overhaul undertaken by Yamaha to counter the charge of the Honda brigade (especially in racing form) is still being felt today.

The changes were obvious from the off. The new angular look was complimented by a rev hungry motor that was really up for a tickle. Ancillaries were also spot on and delivered a racy feeling that the uncompromising riding position always threatened. OK, so it didn't rev to the 17,500rpm it initially claimed, but it still produced enough power to entertain huge numbers on track. Road riders were less prevalent, meaning unabused examples are

harder to come across. Indeed, what with the R6 Cup and track fleets using the bike, on top of a big contingent of racers, you'll have to have your wits about you when going in for the sales kill.

Now, don't let track or race use put you off, because many racers are fastidious about the upkeep of their machines and are anal in treating their bikes to the best bits fitted by the best people. But we tend to see that as soon as a bike gets crashed, so does the interest in keeping it in prime condition. So ask to see receipts, boxes of bits and phone up engine builders or the like to see if stories add up. Lots got nicked, so cross check engine and chassis numbers.

Subsequent changes didn't bring much to the party, so stick with this version to get the best bang for your buck.



2007 FZ1

WHY: YOUR HEAD RULES

YOUR HEART AND YOU

WANT QUALITY

PRICES: £3K FOR AN

EARLY HIGH MILER...

What was once simple fare, in the form of the Fazer 1000, became a lot more plush in the revised guise of the FZ1, released in 2006. Moving from the Thunderace engine and almost budget package of the original (albeit hugely effective and entertaining) to that of the 2004-06 R1, the FZ1 was treading new territory and attracting new riders. The whole kit and caboodle got changed on the new bike, meaning it got a proper frame (as opposed to the old tubular chassis), decent suspension and some handsome looks. Initial complaints of sharp fuelling were solved via Power Commanders, but over the years Yamaha listened to complaints and curbed that initial jerk you'd get asking for gas from a closed throttle. This programme began on 2007 bikes onwards. The motor is bullet-proof, the build quality brilliant bar a few furry bolts, but it's just not quite as ebullient as the likes of the Triumph Speed Triple, or the Kawasaki Z1000. It was never intended to be a naked R1, and it doesn't ride like one either. In FZ1 Fazer form, you get the ability to munch more miles with its lil' fairing and easy riding position, but better fuel economy and a plusher seat wouldn't go amiss.

The VMAX rides as mad as it looks...



A classy workhorse in a class of donkey derby nags...

2009 VMAX

WHY: YOU'RE

ALLERGIC TO

CORNERS

PRICES: NOT

MANY WERE

SOLD, SO PRICES

STILL ABOVE £12K

A 1,679cc v-four rocketship is worthy of inclusion here, just so you can learn how to spin a bike up (it achieves this easily). This is an impressive piece of mechanical and electrical engineering – however, it's a beast on the road, especially when the corners keep coming at ya.

2013 MT-09

WHY: LIFE'S BEEN TOO DULL RECENTLY
PRICES: OFFER £5K AND SEE WHERE YOU GET TO

We wouldn't normally feature such a fresh bike, but seeing as we've seen some 2013 bikes for sales temptingly close to £5,000 we're more than happy to put it under the microscope here. First up, the bad news. The initial fuelling of the MT can be a bit too enthusiastic. With three maps to choose from, Map A was almost psychotic, Normal was livable and Map B just a bit too dull. Free flashes from Yamaha are the answer, and if a bike hasn't been treated to one of these, then go get it done. The rest is all good news, with the MT-09 a real return to form for Yamaha. The move to the inline triple configuration is the key to success, but the slashing of weight compared to an FZ8 comes a close second. The motor allows the bike to offer all things to all men – and a fair amount of women, too. We've heard of no problems beyond the fuel injection, but there have been a few owners that have got their money's worth and stuck on over 15,000 miles. Most, however, are still under 5k, so revel in a lot of options out there for you to play off each other.



The MT-09 is a wheelie good option...

**1993 YZF750**

WHY: YOU WANT A PROPER LEGEND
PRICES: TATTY PROJECTS START FROM A GRAND

Now cheap and cheerful, there are plenty of beaten up examples of the YZF about ready to be picked up for a song and returned to their former glory. Just don't go too far down the ratty route...

2008 YZF-R125

WHY: YOU HAVE TO PASS A TEST SOMETIME
PRICES: GET AN UNCRASHED ONE FROM £1,500

The most obvious choice of the modern 125s out there. There are hundreds to choose from in the online classifieds, so don't buy one that's been down the road. It's a bloody good bike – for a learner legal, that is...



I am Rossi, I am Rossi...

Getting some decking down...

**2010 FZ8**

WHY: YOU LIKE THE LOOKS, AND THE SOUNDS OF PEGS SCRAPING
PRICES: DIPPING UNDER THE £4K MARK NOW

Like the revised FZ1, the FZ8 looked pretty, but dynamically there are a few better options – not least saving an extra grand and going MT-09 shopping. It's worth a look and they look ace tricked up...

Riding



THE CALIFORNIA SUPERBIKE SCHOOL

Founded by the legendary Keith Code in 1980, the California Superbike School offers a step-by-step method of technique oriented rider training in the art of cornering motorcycles. Over the past 30 years hundreds of thousands of students have improved their riding skills and cornering capabilities at CSS and their team of professional coaches are dedicated to your improvement.



*Are you a chicken
or a big cock?*

LEAN WHERE OTHERS FEAR TO TREAD...

Keith Code's expert riding tips will help you start scrubbing away those pesky chicken strips on your tyres...

WORDS: KEITH CODE PICS: CSS, FB ARCHIVE

Riders know that tyres with the sides nicely scrubbed in, rather than worn flat in the middle, are evidence of...what, exactly? More experience? More adventure? More fun?

Leaning, having fun and ripping up the rear. Good times!

Rear tyres ridden right out to the edges, with that well-worked, textured pattern etched into the rubber from deep leaning and hard acceleration, garner secret admiring glances and plainly communicate one

thing – this rider has some brass. Had Sigmund Freud been a trackday fiend, on a KTM of course, he might have called this condition 'tread envy'.

While I'm not partial to the term 'chicken strips' it is

evocative. No one wants to show up sporting chicken strips, and those who have eaten theirs away often exude a rooster's pride. Riders with the chicken strip stigma all have similar questions; how do you know when the rear tyre will slide out? What are the signals? They just want something to crow about, some physical evidence that they, too, are having more fun on their bike.

Aside from bragging rights, achieving a feel for accurately gauging lean angle and traction is a critical safety point. If a cornering situation demands more lean angle than you can safely deliver, you become road bait. Alternatives include running off the road or into oncoming traffic, or in-corner braking that can work with practice, but takes time and tends to be a panic reaction, increasing the possibility of crashing. The ability to use all of the available lean angle expands your options.

Answers to the traction question vary according to myriad technical riding skills. In addition, there are mechanical



CONTACT CSS TO BOOK: TEL 08700 671061 EMAIL INFO@SUPERBIKESCHOOL.CO.UK WEB WWW.SUPERBIKESCHOOL.CO.UK

Got a riding question - either on the track or on the road? Want the CSS team to help? Just drop us a line and we'll get it answered for you. letters@fastbikesmag.com



aspects that can be adjusted to help improve your read on lean and traction. One tip is to soften the suspension, especially at the rear, so you aren't feeling every distracting bump and ripple in the pavement. That feedback alone can make a rider wary of approaching traction – and lean – limits. A plush 30-40mm of sag when you are seated on the bike is a good place to start.

Using 'track' tyre pressure settings can improve traction feedback, too – tyres sometimes transmit better grip signals at lower pressures. I've seen good results running popular sport tyres between 28-32 psi (cold). Be aware that lower pressures might not be suitable for high speeds, and always check with the tyre manufacturer to find what is the usable range for your tires and conditions.

Keeping a light grip on the bars is essential, too. Gripping the tank with your legs stabilizes your lower body, so you can relax your torso, shoulders, and arms. The ground looks further away in a full upright position, so stay as low on the bike as possible. Pointing your chin where you want the bike to go works better than tilting your head to level the horizon. Most humans can tilt their heads up to 35 degrees, but you'll have to lean further than that to scrub off chicken strips.

If you can't trust your sense of speed, you won't trust your sense of lean. Learn to gauge your entry speed as a pro would, by feel, not by looking at the speedo. As your sense of speed improves, so will your confidence in leaning over. Focus on achieving a progressive – not aggressive – throttle roll-on through the corners, in order to maximize traction and bike



Listen hard and rid the strips!

stability. Then work on cornering grip, not drive grip. No heroics; save the hard exit drives for later.

Naturally, practicing these techniques at a racetrack is best. If you only ride on the road, choose corners you are familiar with. The smoother the better. The tighter the better too, because it keeps speeds to a minimum. On many tight, twisty sections of road you can achieve strip-erasing lean angles without exceeding the posted speed limit.

Many riders have no idea how far they are actually leaning over; they feel perilously close to maximum lean when they aren't. Here's a simple solution and a way to chart your progress. Mark a couple thin chalk lines along the edge of your strips, next to the scuffed rubber. When these disappear, chalk again. Keep this up and you are progressing toward becoming a rooster – and an overall safer rider. 

ANGLING FOR MORE LEAN

Q When I'm on a track I feel as though I am getting really leaned over but when I see my photos my body position and my bike are still very upright. How can I get used to leaning over more?

Jim, Exeter

A Our perception of how much we humans are leaned over, comes from our eyes and our ears and is an in-built safety mechanism to stop us falling over, a small degree of movement and we right ourselves to balance. On a bike, of course, we want more than a few degrees of lean so we need to 'fool' those warnings of 'I am falling over'. Rotating your head laterally towards the corner allows a more level view that keeps your eyes content, and positioning your head lower means it moves less of a distance between upright and full lean (think of an upside-down pendulum) than it does if you are sat up, fooling your ears into feeling you have leaned less. Give it a try!



ASK AN EXPERT

ALL THE CSS COACHES HAVE SPENT YEARS HONING THEIR RIDING, AND ARE PERFECTLY PLACED TO ANSWER YOUR RIDING QUESTIONS. SO DON'T BE SHY, ASK AWAY!



Fool your brain and get more lean!

YOU GOTTA ROLL WITH IT...

Q I know I should roll the throttle on all through a corner but in longer ones I find myself having to roll it off and on a bit to stay on my line. I know it's not right, but how do I fix it?

A An easy fix would be to slow down a bit on the entry, or to roll the gas on less through the turn but how about looking at changing your line to match the throttle control you want rather than altering your throttle control to match the line you have? Do you need to turn later? Do you need to start the turn from a wider position? Are you getting the straightest, widest arc you can? Getting good throttle control is the sign of having a good line!



Play with lines to get your exit drive bang on

Technical



The wait begins...



JHS RACING OWNER/BIG CHEESE

James Holland runs JHS Racing in Keynsham, and he is our go to guy whenever we need a bike looking at. JHS Racing was set up in the mid 1990s and has since expanded as its reputation has grown. The workshop deals with everything, from scooters to superbikes. Having built and worked on race Suzuki SVs and Triumph 675s James has a wealth of knowledge with these bikes, but elsewhere James' knowledge is as extensive as it gets. So from tyre fitting to MOTs, from dyno work to suspension, James really does it all. And here he is, passing on his years in the business to Fast Bikes readers!



Br-Br-Break It Down... .

Other than phoning a friend, just what can you do if your bike breaks down at the side of the road?

Roadside breakdowns are becoming a thing of the past, aren't they? The ones we see are generally shitters with terminal issues, or electronic failures. A modern bike now is a very sophisticated piece of equipment with very adept, very capable electronic systems and they very rarely go wrong. Generally, breakdowns happen due to third-party interference, like changing something that shouldn't

be changed or adding something that's then gone wrong. Or not even paying attention to what fuel you're putting in or how much is left in the tank!

Yup, it's the aftermarket bolts that tend to go wrong. OEM fitment stuff never goes wrong. Alarm systems and immobilisers are the biggest issue, as insurance companies say you have to have them. Tracker systems draining batteries and alarms throwing a

wobbler means you have no chance of fixing it roadside.

Regular readers will probably be bored of me harping on about servicing, but if your bike is maintained to the manufacturer's intervals by a main dealer or a reputable service centre that knows the product, lots of these problems can be found and rectified before they occur.

Running out of petrol on a fuel-injected bike usually isn't a problem. The pump pressurises the system and you're off again. Carburetted bikes with an electric fuel pump (like old R6s and R1s) can be slightly trickier, as you'll have to continuously turn it over to get the fuel back into the carbs to replenish them. If you've got a weak battery, it may not have enough power to keep cranking it over. A situation where you've run out of petrol can lead to having a flat battery! Again, this would be picked up during servicing, where charge rates and alternator efficiency would be checked.

Punctures are obviously still common. There are various temporary get-yourself-home



*A very nice man.
Or is that the other lot?*



plugs and slimy stuff, but I'm not a great lover of these and none of the tyre manufacturers will warranty a tyre with anything like that applied. We've seen instances where that slimy gel stuff has eaten away at the wheel. Wheels hold magnesium content and magnesium doesn't react well to stuff like that. If you're desperate, there are still the old-school expanding foam options available which 'go off' after a chemical reaction occurs. Then again, if you've got snazzy £2k wheels, you don't want to be fixing a puncture with something that'll eat those rims. And then there are the little nitrogen canisters that you use to get off your head at a festival, which are used with temporary plugs.

One of the problems with modern sportsbikes is trying to find the space to store this stuff. It's hard enough with the standard toolkit, and some brand-new bikes don't even come with a toolkit anymore. You might get a token allen key to remove a seat or fairings to get to a battery, for example. Triumph 675s come

with 5mm allen key and a cheap little screwdriver. Ducati 999s used to have a lovely toolkit fitted to the inside of the fairing panel fastened with Velcro. KTM's are generally well equipped.

Some cars don't even come with a spare wheel now, because there's no room for it. And society has changed; people won't change a wheel because they're soft and don't want to get their hands dirty. You don't even have to ring roadside assistance now, because the car communicates with the manufacturer to say its broken down before it's even stopped!

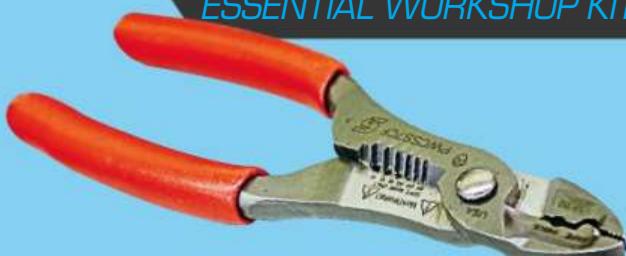
Don't get me wrong, most of the Japanese bikes still come with a basic toolkit, but they're hardly going to save the day. You might be able to change a bulb, adjust suspension with a ring spanner or, at a push, adjust your chain tension. But there's nothing there that will rescue you when push comes to shove. A lot of this is down to specialist tools needed, and things like rear wheel nuts have got so big it's impossible to store 60mm sockets under a seat.

**Comprehensive toolkits are few and far between.
Check out the bottle opener. Only KTM...**



If you don't know the difference between yokes and yolks, Dzus and Zeus, or suspension and suspenders – email the experts letters@fastbikes.com

PROPER TOOLS ESSENTIAL WORKSHOP KIT



Snap-On: Wire Crimpers And Snips

I got these brand-new this week and they're a snip (geddit!) at only £26.50. They're pretty self-explanatory, but I use them for a lot of wiring and loom modification work, stripping the wires back and fitting new connectors. The thickness ranges from 14-28mm and the quality is so much better than cheaper stuff I've used in the past. The serrated edge is useful (and bloody sharp) and they're cold forged, meaning they're going to last.

You could say toolkits reflect how bikes have evolved – bike reliability has come on so much in recent years.

Even batteries are so good now. They don't go flat, and everyone's got an Optimate (or an equivalent trickle charger) on their bike. Rather than breaking down or going bang, all modern bikes will have a limp mode or failsafe device to get you home. For arguments sake, if you've got an ABS sensor that's gone down, it'll flash at you in some way. At worst, a limp mode will get you home at 30mph, and then you can transport the bike to a dealer. And most of these bikes require main dealer computers to access these electronic management systems.

These days, you're pretty screwed if your bike is overheating. Gone are the days when you could wait 20 minutes for the barrel to cool down. An overheating problem is not going to solve itself.

A lot of people say, 'Yeah, I've

serviced my own bike.' We can all change oil and filter, and fit pads, but there's so much more to servicing and maintenance, and you won't be aware of various updates through the dealer network. Things like Keihin ECUs are constantly updated, so your bike will automatically be modernised accordingly to fix glitches, sensor readings or any other minor trivialities.

So, why are there toolkits underneath our bikes' seats? It also goes back to human evolution and the fact that bikes weren't as sophisticated. More people were hands-on, and they carried out a lot more work on their own bikes. At one point, you rode your bike to and from work, you washed your bike at the weekend, you lubed it and adjusted it, and you cared for it. Nowadays, more people treat them like cars – they ride 'em then chuck 'em in the corner.

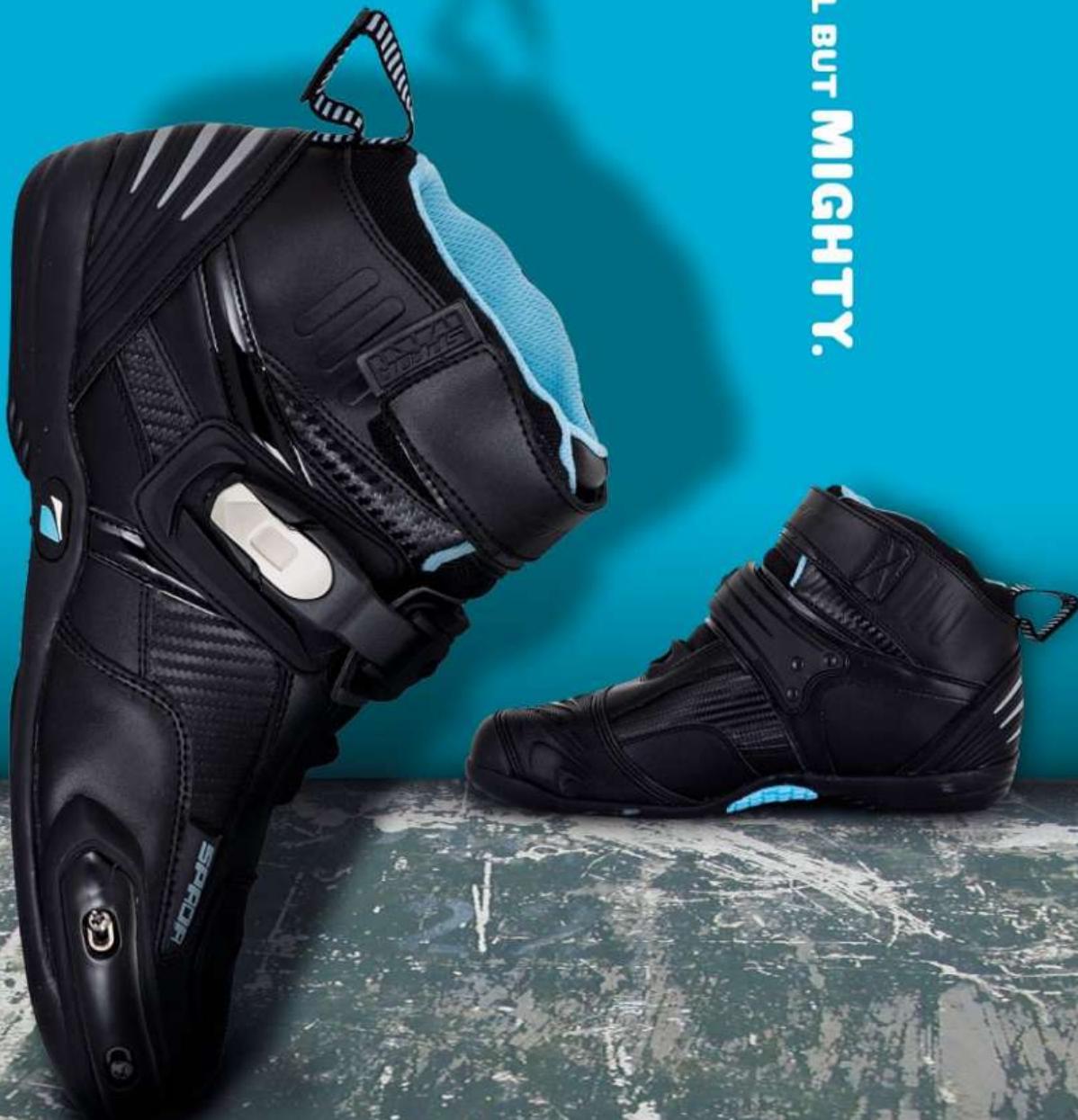
If you don't use a GSX-R properly (low mileage commutes, etc) without giving it a blast and getting it really nice and hot, the engine will condensate inside which causes problems on the neutral light switch. The condensation collects and illuminates the dash light.

Suzukis are very simple to work on. Their wiring systems use the same colour codes and circuit wiring for injectors and fuel pumps, for example. If you had a fuel pump relay go down and you've got mechanical nous, you could bypass it and get yourself home with some wire and wire cutters.

Ultimately, if you're stuck at the side of the road, the best piece of equipment you could have is a mobile phone. That allows roadside assistance, which isn't much nowadays, and most even specialise in bike recovery.

compact

SMALL BUT MIGHTY.



THE LITTLE BOOT FOR BIG RIDES

...the new COMPACT boot from SPADA includes a PU coated water resistant leather outer with a breathable membrane. A toughened gear change pad for durability, a toe slider, race sole and a reinforced toe and heel all complete the quality feel.

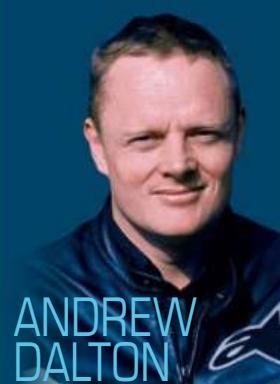
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Get on it



Legal



ANDREW DALTON

PENAL SERVITUDE PREVENTOR

The Fast Bikes Legal Clinic is compiled by Andrew Dalton, and his bike riding barristers and solicitors at White Dalton Motorcycle Solicitors.

They deal with personal injury claims and their sister company, Motor Defence Team, deals with all the motoring offences. They know everything about bike law. Andrew is a former London motorbike courier turned barrister and solicitor, and we know he's good. All the White Dalton lawyers are qualified barristers, or solicitors, or both - and they all have full bike licences, too. They don't act for insurance companies or the prosecution. They are Britain's most specialist law practice, and if they don't know the answer to your question, there probably isn't one. Don't rely on the advice from your insurance appointed solicitor, get proper independent advice.

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Visit their websites
whitedalton.co.uk
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If you've been a naughty biker, you need some decent advice, get it from: mail@whitedalton.co.uk



Not content with driving on the wrong side of the road, Spaniards can also drive on the right side, but at the wrong time!

The Pain In Spain Causes A Strain...

Had an accident abroad? What are the ramifications?

Q I was involved in a motorcycle accident in Spain three years ago. In their report, the local Spanish police confirmed that the Spanish driver had gone for an overtake on a blind bend and had forced me into the rocky side of the road where I crashed. I sustained serious injuries to my shoulder, neck and back. I have not been able to return to my old trade as a plasterer and I am now reliant on jobseekers allowance. I believed I had legal cover with my policy of insurance but apparently it excluded claims outside of the United Kingdom, so I instructed solicitors here in Scotland to pursue a claim against the Spanish driver. I was originally impressed with my solicitors who sent very aggressive letters on my behalf. Liability was admitted after a few months by an English claims agent working on behalf of the Spanish insurers. After a year it went very quiet, and knowing that the three year limitation period was coming up I asked my solicitors for an update and they told me that I did not have a case. They have also suggested that I take a second opinion from another

solicitor. I am not at all clear why what I thought was a straightforward case is now suddenly died. All they would say is that there were some procedural problems.

Name withheld

A Unfortunately your Scots solicitors have dabbled. In Spain there is not a three year limitation period but a one year limitation period. Local Spanish practitioners have methods of extending the limitation period, and there is a general exception for 'freezing' the limitation period when there are meaningful negotiations going on. However, as a foreign practitioner I insist on the issue of Spanish cases within the first year. I believe the Spanish insurers have rejected your case on the basis of the Spanish one year limitation period and it is the Spanish, not Scottish, limitation period which applies in your case. They are right to take the limitation point. Secondly, as you were injured in Spain you cannot use the English or Scots method of compensation, which is markedly different to

Spanish law. In Spanish law your injuries are assessed on the professional level of your work; and you are a skilled tradesman. You are only entitled, as a matter of European treaty law, to the Spanish measure of damages and these will be lower in Spanish law than they are in both Scots and English law. Had your solicitors brought the claim in time, then you would have achieved a substantial sum. You have a pretty well cast-iron case in negligence against your former solicitors. You need to approach solicitors who are experienced in dealing with European claims work. It would be better for you if you could resurrect your original Spanish claim. Your new lawyers will need to take advice from an experienced Spanish lawyer as to whether or not, in Spanish law, your claim could be resurrected under the 'negotiation' extension to limitation. If not, your new solicitors will have to sue your former solicitors in negligence, and you will achieve a sum pretty well the same as though the job had been done properly in the first place.

chatter

STAR LETTER

STILL GOING STRONG

Inspired by your article last month on the TL1000S, I thought I would send in a couple of photos of my TL1000S. She is a '99 model, and with a few modifications she comes in on the dyno at 126.4bhp. It'd be great to have my Widowmaker in the mag!

Graham Revill
And we bet you absolutely love it!

Old, but pure gold...



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A pair of awesome new Oxford RP-4 gloves – worth £39.99 – for writing the Star Letter!

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KID'S CORNER

Never too young to start. Twin bikers!

Sarah Wallace



AS SEEN ON TWITTER

@kinkypimp

@fastbikesmag damn you and your Aprilia loving Facebook article, I want one now....



@billydoyle07

Peace and quiet and my favourite @fastbikesmag @Deaf_Kev

@fastbikesmag Absolutely not enough "R"'s in the new bikes title. #disappointed



TOO CHEESY?

So, what to get for the man that's got everything? I've got a wonderful girlfriend, a beautiful, talented daughter, a great family and good friends! Oh, yes! A pepperoni pizza with 46 on it! What a great choice. It's my age and on top of that it's The Doctor's race number...

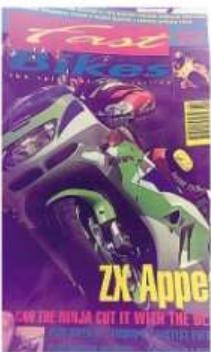
John Hansen

We like it that you're easily pleased John!

THE WAITING GAME

Sat down while the bike has an MOT to find this old gem in the waiting room.

Philly Harris
Blimey, name and shame so we can get a more recent copy to them!



SPIDEY SENSES ARE TINGLING...

Check out my ride. Not only is it fast, but it looks good too! My favourite part is the turbo. When I got the bike from my aunt she said it made between 500-550bhp. Yes, she had given me the bike as a surprise – I'm paying her back in payments. However, I travel all over Texas to put on acrobatic shows and help raise money for kids with cancer and other horrible illnesses. She thought the bike would be a great addition to my performance.

Tim Linder, Texas



A superhero, doing it for the kids



Want your greatest riding cock-up, triumph, or just the missus' naked form immortalised in these hallowed pages? Email letters@fastbikesmag.com

FIRESTARTER

What would be the chances of seeing my Prodigy ZX-10R in your mag, even if only a wee little pic?

Garry Streeter

Pretty good, we'd reckon...

AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED...

Just read your editorial and scanned the magazine. Sincerely well done this month. I imagine that your prodigious work rate was slowed somewhat by your recent accident, but the magazine content does not reflect that (or your reduced numbers of staff) – it is excellent! From one of your original subscribers (back to Colin's days), may I wish you a quick recovery to full health.

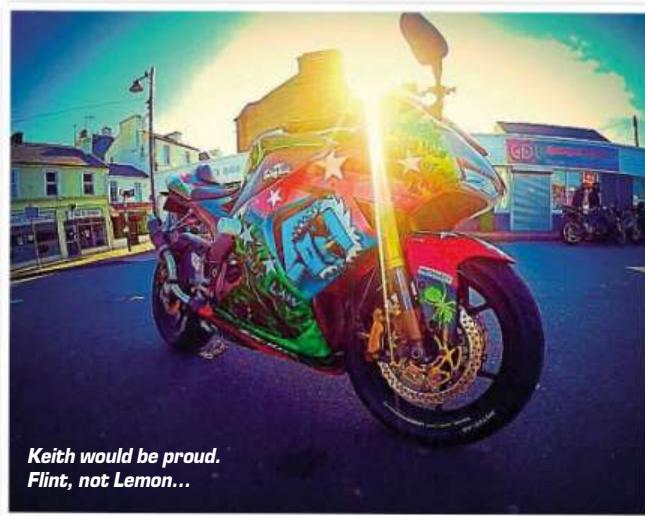
Get well soon and thanks again for your hard work.

Mike Wood

It's been a fraught few months, and no mistake, but little letters like this make smashing into the side of a car worthwhile. Nearly!

RIP OFF BRITAIN?

I recently bought a brand new X-Lite helmet from my local dealer and then started to look around to buy a Bluetooth headset to fit in it. Can't quite work out why spare parts and accessories for motorcycles are so, so expensive in the UK, (and have been for as long as I can remember). On



*Keith would be proud.
Flint, not Lemon...*

average over £250-£270 was quoted through various dealerships and accessory shops for a NCOM system to fit my specific helmet. But if you try shops in Italy and Germany on the internet I can purchase the very same headset for around £150 plus postage. A massive saving of £100 and only about £9 to post it to the UK!

So why do we Brits keep getting ripped off when the countries mentioned above are both in the EU but we still have to pay well over the odds? A complete set of brake pads (front and rear: £16.99) for my FJR1300 and six stop adjustable

aluminium clutch/brake levers (£20) have all been bought by me recently from overseas countries like China or Hong Kong, and, again, even with postage costs saved myself a heap of cash. The quality just the same as items stocked in the UK too.

It's just not fair and I do intend writing to the Trade & Industry secretary to ask why.

Rant over guys!

John Sharratt

We feel your pain, John. Even with exchange rate fluctuations it still seems we pay through the nose for everything...



AS SEEN ON FACEBOOK

Fast Bikes Magazine: What's the shortest length of time you've ever had a bike for – what was it and why did you get rid of it?

Peter Herrington: An hour and half. Honda CX500. Bought a non runner for 200 quid, cleared the crap out of the tank and sold it for 800 quid once running :)

Mike Fairfield: Sold my brand new R6 after 8 days in '99. Got stopped by police 10 times in 8 days; wheelies, small plate, wheelies, speeding and more wheelies. Joys of being 19! Got a 14 day ban in the end...

Paul Cain: I once owned a CBR for about an hour. Bought the bike, so happy with it I loaded it on the trailer. Going home the trailer came off the car at 100kph. Bike went end to end down the road, written off...

Martin Harris: Electric moped – purchased on eBay – not kept very long – I don't think I need to give reasons... 

Scott Travers: GSX-R400, had it for 4 hours, it was a shop loan bike while my NSR was being tuned. Handled it back after a high speed low side...

Ginner Lewington: I bought a Kawasaki GT550. Rode it half a mile down the road and the engine blew up. Back to the shop it went...

Llewellyn Van der Merwe: Honda VTR1000 Firestorm. Bought the Saturday, sold the Thursday. 5 days and the wife said she doesn't like riding it. Replaced the same day with an '01 Triumph Sprint RS.

Steve Powell: My mate picked his brand new BMW S1000RR from Vines in Guilford. 25 minutes later it was written off by an uninsured driver. He got away with some cuts and scrapes, but the bike was totalled.

John Morgan: Bought a Gixer Thou, an hour later sobered up. Got rid of that fucker before somebody saw me. Jeez, don't drink guys!

Andrew Gosser: Monster 796. No guts. Sold after 6 months. Loved the look though... 

Robert Clegg: I bought an R6 after having worked away for a few years. I'd always had big bikes but 'buy something small to begin with' I thought. A month later it was sold and I was riding its big brother, the R1.

Greg Hawkes: Bimota DB10. 4 months. Crashed my friggin brains out...

Horatio Bedwetter: RGV250. Owned it for only a few seconds. High sided it leaving the shop breaking my wrist.

Stuart Young: Sold K9 Gixer 1000 for a new Speed Triple... lasted 4 months. GUTLESS

Davy Thompson: 03 CB900F Hornet. Kept it one week. Most boring bike I threw me leg over!

Justin Patrick: 3 hours. I got a TZR250 as a project. I got it home and my neighbour, who is also a biker, had a look and fell in love with it. He offered me a higher price than I paid for it so I sold it there and then.

Stephen Magee: TL-R1000, got about 2 miles from shop I just bought it from, big tankslapper, through the hedge and wrote it off...

Garry Jonas: 'Kin ell, My six months ownership seems like an absolute lifetime compared to some of these!

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Travel & Tracks

POSTCARD FROM: PUY MARY, FRANCE

I love France, but am a bit sick of slowing up for wobbling cyclists every other corner, so I went off exploring another area at the end of July. The Auvergne has always appealed to me, being a bit off the beaten track, but it still offers roads every bit as good as the Alps. It still take a long time to get to, a day in the saddle, but having shacked up in a cheapy hotel just south of Clermont on the Sunday night, we spent the next few days on all manner of brilliant roads. If you stick in between the A75 and the A89 then you won't go too far wrong, and the extinct volcanoes of the Auvergne offer brilliant topography to blast up and down on all day. OK, so there are still a few cyclists (what possesses them, I don't know), but far fewer than in the Alps. That means that progress is maintained throughout, especially with there being far fewer switchbacks (here's a confession – I don't actually like switchbacks, what's the point?). So what you get are decent flowing roads, plenty of second, third and fourth gear corners, friendly folk and a bloody good time. The only issue was that I had to buy another rear hoop for my Hayabusa for the ride home. From what I remember, this was the view from Puy Mary, and typifies what the region has to offer.

Tony, Warwick

WIN

Tell us about your travels. Send in a story and some pictures (to fastbikes@futurenet.com) and you could win an ace Kriega R35 backpack – worth £145!

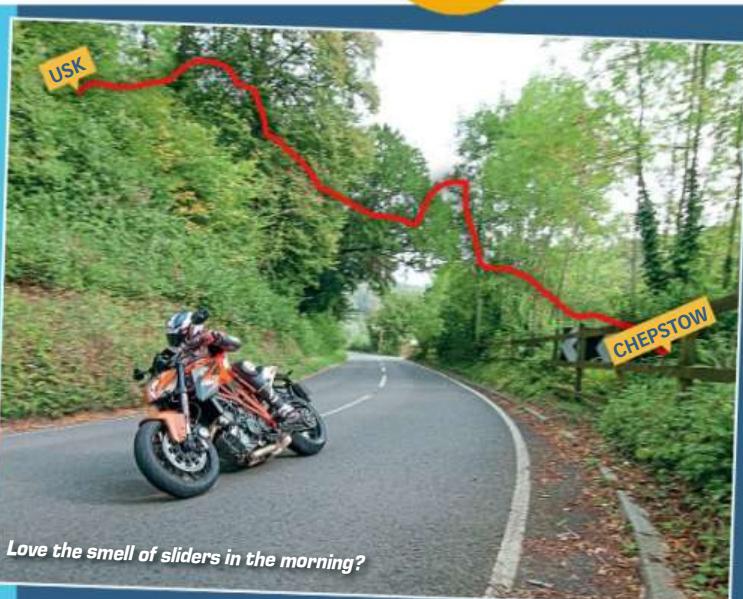


Kriega

WORTH
£145!



Er, yes please!



Love the smell of sliders in the morning?

WORTH GETTING UP FOR: B4235 CHEPSTOW TO USK

To get the best of any road, it's worth setting the alarm for. No cops, hardly any traffic and a brew at the end of a run all make the sacrifice worth it...

You don't have to stray too far into Wales to come across some of the principality's best roads. Chepstow is just over the old Severn Bridge, and not far down is the B4235. It only takes a mile or so to understand what you've got on your plate here as the road starts snaking through the woodland that surrounds it. Yes, there's not much to look at on the way, but that's probably for the best as the road should be taking up all of your

concentration. It's just over a dozen miles from Chepstow to Usk, but that's more than enough to justify the early rise. The road does have a reputation, so it does attract police. There are a few houses along the way, and given its situation you will get some agricultural vehicles at certain points in the day. Sunday morning shouldn't be such a time, but you never know. And given the closed nature of the road, with little vision beyond the next vanishing point, it's best to keep your powder dry. Explore the area too, with decent roads, friendly tea spots and the more mountainous areas of Wales not far away.

GRIP ADVISOR: COLD TEAR

If you don't treat your tyres to warmers, and we're not saying that you have to, then your rubber could quickly get a nasty case of cold tear. But what is it exactly and how do you know if you're suffering?

If, after a trackday session, your tyre has a pattern of uneven lines running across a segment of your tyres that you can get a thumbnail under and prise up then it's likely that you've got a case of the cold tear. When the tyre has completely cooled down, check the pressure in it. Then check the recommended pressure for that tyre on track. You'll probably find that you're running a pressure that's too high. This causes quick and uneven heating of the tyre, with the carcass not up to temp while the surface is simmering. When this happens, the polymers that hold everything together start to give up, hence the tearing. A drop of just a few psi is often enough to cure this, although if you've reached this situation already you'll already be shopping for a new one...

So set your pressures correctly, try and invest in a set of warmers or warm your tyres in a more systematic and sympathetic manner.



SORTING SUSPENSION SET-UP: REBOUND DAMPING

BIKE HANDLING LIKE A POGO STICK? STIFF AS A PLANK?



After you've hit a bump, suspension compresses and then it wants to return to the state it was in before. This is the rebound movement and is controlled through the flow of oil within a shock or fork's internals – specifically, the shims. So why would you want to adjust this?

If the rebound settings cause the suspension to extend too quickly the bike will feel like it's pogo-ing around as it slowly settles back to its pre-bump position or extend into a bigger bump better. By which time you may have hit another bump and moved further away from your ideal position, compounding the issue.

If there's not enough rebound damping then the suspension isn't being allowed to follow the road, so grip and traction suffer. The bike will feel hard and uncommunicative, leaving your tyre to pick up a lot of

the work with each bumping adding more compression.

Of course, there's a trade-off, and the ideal rebound setting, both front and rear, will depend on the road or track surface, your weight and grip levels. So what's the ideal setting? There isn't one, but too little damping manifests itself in poor traction and an uncontrolled feel, too much makes the bike feel too stiff. Typically, if things feel plush until you start pushing on or the bike pitches excessively under braking and accelerating then there's not enough rebound damping. If the bike wants to run wide or hop under braking then there's too much rebound. Other symptoms present themselves, but some DIY tinkering or a bit of money thrown at a suspension specialist can diagnose and remedy most issues.

To sort your suspension, employ an expert. Or in this case, the village idiot...



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RACING DATES

MOTOGP

- ⇒ 13th September – Misano
Go see Rossi race on his doorstep
- ⇒ 27th September – Aragon
Last chance in Europe before Valencia
- ⇒ 11th October – Motegi
MotoGP season turns Japanese

WSB

- ⇒ 20th September – Jerez
Soak up some Spanish sun
- ⇒ 4th October – Magny Cours
Go for a prance in France

BSB

- ⇒ 20th September – Assen
Get some Dutch courage and go
- ⇒ 4th October – Silverstone
The penultimate round

THE REST

- ⇒ 20th September – Paul Ricard
The Bol D'Or returns home
- ⇒ 27th September – Donington
Weekend meet for Thundersport
- ⇒ 27th September – Frohburg, Germany
Last road race of the year in Europe

Assen about this year?



TOP 6 TRACKDAYS

Here's what we'd give our right arm for this month...

- ⇒ 19th September – Silverstone - £149 – No Limits. You'll be having a blast round the shorter national circuit.
- ⇒ 23rd September – Jerez - £599 – Focussed Events. Two days on track, two nights on the sherry.
- ⇒ 29th September – Donington - £165 – Focussed Events. Go and wake the neighbours up at Donny. Noisy day.
- ⇒ 30th September – Brands GP - £175 – MSV. Celebrate the end of summer in style at the big Brands track.
- ⇒ 3rd October – Rockingham - £129 – No Limits. Ignore the naysayers, Rockingham's a proper good track.
- ⇒ 9th October – Castle Combe - £130 – Castle Combe. The last trackday date of the year for da Castle crew.

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in the land that can make up
for not being on this all summer...**



ROOTSY YAMAHA YZF-R1

TIME ON TEST:
4 MONTHS

01518 ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: 175
GAIN: 0

NEXT AIM:
RIDE IT!

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Finally getting back on board the mothership..."

It's been a very long seven weeks, but I'm finally back on a bike after grimacing through long and hard physiotherapy sessions – I've just been round the block for a tester. During the middle of the pain, I've had this bike as the focus. Not riding the R1 throughout summer has been nothing short of torture, and my plans to ride long and hard through July and August will have to be fitted into September and the warmish bit of October instead.

Charlie did his best to brush the worst of the dust off, and with the 899 still nursing its scars, the last two weeks of the month were all about the R1.

After Charlie had got the exhaust fitted and the magic numbers measured on the JHS dyno, having had an Akrapovic can fitted, it seemed that he'd got the bit between his teeth. Most kindly, he'd got the bike down to Phoenix Yamaha so that they could wield the spanners and get a set or rearsets, levers and a screen fitted.

The parts were all via Yamaha, whose selection of aftermarket kit is both broad

and tempting. Boasting all the big names in the catalogue, it makes your dealer a one-stop-shop for the beginning of your blinging – even if the smaller players may grumble a bit. It also means that there are no nagging problems about warranties being invalidated if the manufacturer is supplying these parts.

And fitted by the Phoenix dealership, there are no grumbles about the end product. Starting with the simplest fit, the endurance screen offers a bit more protection, shifting the windblast up from your midriff to your chest. Truth be told, I've not yet been quick enough on the bike to benefit from the advantages offered, but that's a situation that will be rectified once the hand is fully healed.

The levers are next up on the very nice to have list. I had no complaints with the stock ones, but there's no escaping the fact that there's not a stock lever on the planet that looks sexy. These Gilles made billet levers are sumptuous stuff, offering five positions via the easy to access anodised knob. A remote adjuster is also available, but on the commute in I deem this ever so slightly over the top. Both brake and clutch have been fitted, both are foldable in the event of an accident or fall, and you can see why they cost ten times the amount of the Chinese made stuff you get on the Bay of plenty.

Saving the loveliest to last are the rearsets, again made by Luxembourg engineers Gilles. The thing I love about these rearsets is the eccentric adjustment that's offered in the design. This gives a much better fit rather than



The best thing to come out of Luxembourg since, er, time began!



Before and after. Rootsy takes control of the fancy footwork...



Price from new: £14,999

Insurance group: 17

Modifications	Price
GB Racing protection	£173.11
Akrapovic exhaust	£669.99
Endurance screen	£101.99
Brake lever	£159.99
Clutch lever	£159.99
Rearsets	£599.99
RUNNING TOTAL	£1865.06

other systems, so you can really take your time and set the bike up perfectly to your feet. The shift is now super-crisp, in part due to there being no free play in the bearing journals, and what with the 'shifter' fitted it's an absolute joy to bang up the gears. If only they were standard fitment...

So all told, and despite me not spending much time on it, it's been a successful month for the R1. Adorned with some luscious extras, it's now looking every part the BSB and WSB winner it has now frequently become. More on the performance next month...

Thanks to: Yamaha for all the bits, you can see them at www.yamaha-motor.eu. Also fanks to Phoenix Yamaha for the top work on the spanners. Based in Trowbridge call 'em on 01225 775171 or on they're on the t'internet at www.phoenixmotorcycles.co.uk



BENJAMIN MV AGUSTA F3 800

TIME ON TEST:
2 MONTHS

ODO METER
00672 MILES

BHP: 125
GAIN: NA

NEXT AIM:
Ear Plugs?

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Without bikes! Argh!"



Can't beat a nice bit of carbon lushness

It's just say that this month it's been handy that we've had a lot of test bikes in. I've been bereft of the BMW since SBOTY, and it doesn't look like it'll be returning, but more on that next month. And I only had the MV for a few days before it was whisked off back to Hampshire MV Agusta, home of the Tsingtao BSB squad, for some love.

The first thing they did was give it an initial service, which had been ever so slightly overdue mileage wise. But Dave and the boys weren't going to leave her standard for long... While she was there she began the start of a long and intensive transformation which should spectacularly come to fruition within the next couple of issues.

The first thing they did was to add some carbon fibre goodies. She's now wearing a carbon mudguard, hugger and chain protector, which all in comes to £405, but it's quality gear and gives the bike a nicer edge to its look. Looks are nowt without go, though, so that triple stacked stock exhaust wasn't long for this world. In its place is a GP-esque SC Project slip-on can. I think it looks mega, and with the baffle out you wouldn't

believe the noise this thing now makes, it is astonishing. I've never worn earplugs before, bar long motorway journeys, but I may now start! I kinda liked the triple exhaust, but it did make the bike too quiet. We're after more presence and more power, so at £432 the SCP can is a great start.

As we all know by now, as it's ever been thus, one shouldn't ever really change 'zorsts without having a look at the fuelling side of things. The Tsingtao guys fitted a Power Commander V and also a Secondary Fuel Module, which comes to £640 for the pair. Then they stuck it on the dyno for a couple of hours to map it accordingly. I've been told it's made some sweet gains, so when I get a chance to stick her on our comparison dyno over at JHS I'll find out exactly what we've gained over the initial 125bhp reading. It certainly feels like it's got a lot more wallop now! No doubt adding to that increase is the MWR air-filter. Priced depending on which bike you're buying for, and for whatever discipline, I've always thought it a huge shame they're hidden away as MWR jobbies look like real quality kit. The filter allows air to flow more freely and as we all know, more air means more bang for your buck.

Next on the list of things to change were levers, and in their place now sits some Accossato gear. Firstly a clutch perch, which is around £149.99, and then both levers which are finely priced at £39.99 each. Finishing the job is a set of Accossato grips, which seem to do their job of being, er, grips. The screen is now better for tall old me too, as a Zero Gravity item has found its way onboard. This is one mod' I always make myself anyway, to almost every bike I have longterm, so saves me a job and the ZG screens are a nicely constructed item of excellent quality.

Lastly, and to protect against any potential idiocy on my part, some GB



Price from new: £11,899

Insurance group: 16/17

Modifications	Price
SC project Slip-on	£432.00
PCV & Secondary Module	£640.00
Carbon hugger	£120.00
Carbon mudguard	£165.00
Carbon chain-guard	£120.00
Accossato clutch-perch	£149.99
Accossato levers	£79.98
Zero Gravity Screen	£80.00
GB Racing covers	£140.00
Dyno time	£99.00
MWR Air-filter	£121.99
Total	£2,147.96
Contact	www.hampshiremvagusta.co.uk

Racing engine covers are now snugly installed. Again, I always tend to gravitate towards GB kit as a matter of course, so am pretty happy with it. Altogether, it's a huge number of modifications to savour and enjoy, so I'll let you know next month how they all perform. But, we're not stopping here, oh no...

The plan is to make this an 800cc replica of Tsingtao's BSB Supersport machines. So still to come I've been told there's yet more carbon, plenty of R&G bits for extra protection and one of their tail tidy's, some TRW discs and pads, Bonamici rearsets and a steering damper. Now, those particular mods I'm very keen on having! Yet, there's more still! A software upgrade will see the auto-blipper function active (woohoo!), there may be some K-tech suspension on the way and lastly will be a replica paintjob by Apache. By the time this bike is finished, it's going to be absolutely epic. Bring it on!



Jonny attempting to cogitate one very clever excuse to get out of what he's about to do...



JONNY SUZUKI GSX-S1000F

TIME ON TEST:
1 MONTH

00806 ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: TBA
GAIN: NA

NEXT AIM:
ZX-10R?

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Surprised my bike is blue, not green..."

As the first new bike I ever lusted after was the Suzuki GSX600F back in 1989, I'd like to start by saying that racers' edge sportsbike tech is not where it's at for my long-term satisfaction. Widely acknowledged to be barely competent at sportsbikery, and looking like a teapot, I thought it looked great – worrying, for an aspiring photographer and arbiter of cool.

But something stops me from working up much enthusiasm for this GSX-S1000F though; the lack of edge might just be it. In the chopped up timeline of magazine-land chronology, where events occur in the order that paper's printed, I haven't even heard of this bike yet, never mind seen or ridden it.

In life, though, I've done both. If there can be few places more glamorous to be introduced to a bike than the Wing complex at Silverstone, imagine how I felt later when I found myself in not-quite control of this new model round the same turns annually negotiated by the world's top racer types.

Having demonstrated my dubious competence with a few days continuously piloting Kawasaki's ZX-10R across Europe, with its unapologetic air of 'I don't give a shit if you like me or

not', I now get to meet this candidate for frolics, fun, and possible long term relationship. And the 1000F definitely does want you to like it.

It does this by being not too heavy, nor too expensive, or too thirsty – I didn't add any fuel during our full day lapping the International circuit. It's easy to exploit, and kind of alright looking, but isn't going to get other blokes staring at her, sorry, it. First impressions of it being a piece of quality machinery were proven more than correct, as if every part were dipped in honey before assembly, especially that engine.

As you'll know by now, this is the engine from the K5 GSX-R thou' with a more road-relevant provision of power, thanks to a different cam profile. It sure makes it easy to get on with, and it's more than happy to rev, even if an extra rush of excitement is ultimately absent – but by this point the road speed is a bit road-irrelevant, and irreverent, vicar.

Thing is, its un-dislikeability makes it hard to lust after. What's its least attractive quality? It's too bloody perfect. They've even engineered in a fault, in an effort to make it more appealing, but the result is an unpredictable arm-wrenching response to picking up the throttle that is less



Price from new: £9,999
Insurance group: 15

endearing, and more plain annoying. Whether this can be fixed by official means or aftermarket methods will be a priority, as it makes me feel like a berk and look like I'm trying to reset two dislocated shoulders in an eccentric fashion.

I nearly always find fault with footpeg placement, but for me the F's are just racy enough, and nowhere near where you find them on the other kind of bikes this looks a little bit like. If the Renthal bars aren't too high, the reach is a little short, but it does add to the trackday fun, as does their width.

It doesn't take much of a shove to get the GSX-S into a corner even as the speed increases, and at the end of the day I was physically fresh. Mentally? That's a different story that has yet to be told, and who knows what unfolds in that narrative? It might even be the bike upon which – or hanging off of – I get my knee down for the first time ever... 

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Performance Bikes Magazine



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CHARLIE TRIUMPH DAYTONA 675

TIME ON TEST:
4 MONTHS

02734 ODOMETER

BHP: 110
MILES
GAIN: N/A
SHIFTER

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Sharing my Tarmac time with other exotica..."



I have been angling to get the Daytona on track ever since it arrived, but up until now have had no luck in finding the right occasion. In fact, this month I've struggled to stack up the mileage as since Rootsy's off my concerted attempts at shocking Triumph in my mileage totals on the 675 have been somewhat diluted. While the cat's away, the mice will play...

That's not to say I've not got through a few tanks of fuel, it's just that I've just shared my mileage over three bikes this month. What an affliction to suffer, I'm sure you'll agree...

As you'll have seen, my big news this month was the visit to Dunsfold Park to take part in Nick Straughan's Stoppie School. This was as good a test of the Triumph's braking as I could have hoped for having had the training on the specially devised school bike and then testing the theory in real life on the 675.

Before I jumped on the Triumph, Nick grabbed the keys to put it through its paces – but was stymied by the fact that the ABS was still on. This was the first time I'd needed to turn the ABS off, so soon realised that the bike will reset the ABS back to on once you've turned off the ignition. The fact that the bike couldn't be stopped with the ABS enabled, even in the hands of a professional stunter, shows just how good this system is. Thankfully it can be disabled – otherwise the second part of my Stoppie School day would have been much less exhilarating...

I finally got the hang of finding and changing the ABS settings, but it took a while to figure it all out. I reset the time, got it into lap mode, reset all of the mileage, etc, before I got the function I

needed. Last month I stated I was no technophobe, but watching me try to find the right settings must have been like watching my Grandad try to use a mobile phone for the first time. A definite note for the future is to learn the electronic settings as soon as I take receipt of a test bike. There isn't much to learn on the Daytona, after all, and it would have saved a lot of time and even more cursing.

I finally sorted it and Nick showed the way forward. I accelerated down the runway for 25 metres, hit the front brake and rolled the Triumph, er, triumphantly forward on the front wheel. This was a great experience, not just the stunting – like a willy waving trick as much as anyone – but more so in understanding the stopping power and amount of grip you've got as you squeeze the lever and commit to heavy braking. Yes, the R version has the twin Brembo calipers, but the Nissins on the standard bike are every bit as good and worked fabulously well under the braking loads applied, and all without fading as I put the practice in throughout the day.

Late braking has always been a bit of a nemesis for me, especially on track where I always seem to ease into a corner as opposed to braking when I see God. One cure for this big jessie symptom was suggested – to attend Ron Haslam's Race School and get to ride pillion with him. His demonstrations of when and how hard to brake are exactly what I need, but Nick's school will have got me some of the way.

I have some track time coming soon with Al at Castle Combe, which I am desperate to take the 675 too, but the noise restrictions at the circuit are a



Price from new: £9,599
Insurance group: 15

little on the tight side. With the probable fail at Combe I have been advised to leave the 675 at home – whereas the big Kawasaki ZX-10R should get the thumbs up. You work that one out; they're both standard, both on standard pipes, but the big fella is less likely to exceed the noise levels than the triple?

This may be my local circuit, but I'm not willing to risk sessions just in case the Triumph fails, and with a new 'shifter' on the Kawasaki it needs a run out on track. However, riding with a 'shifter' on both the R1 and ZX-10R this month have heightened my want for one on the 675, so it may be back off to Triumph soon for that upgrade.

In addition to this, I have a Sprint Filter in the post from Reactive Engineering. In issue 300 Al reported on all of the most popular filters being measured by the University of Wales and the Sprint came out on top. I am busting to see the difference that a Sprint Filter will make to the Triumph given these findings, especially with the improved air intake that the latest 675 boasts (although it won't be immediately obvious on non ram air on the JHS Dyno). It'll be interesting to look at the standard package and that which is rated so highly. In terms of other mods I have quite a shopping list for my friends at Triumph. More next month....





CHARLIE KAWASAKI NINJA ZX-10R ABS

TIME ON TEST:

2 MONTHS (FBK305)

02895

ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: N/A

GAIN: N/A

TRACK

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Playing with a massive new tool..."



My time with the Kawasaki started on the train this month. A two and a half hour journey from Bath to Team Green's HQ in Bourne End was filled with trepidation as to what my reception would be at the other end. When I asked for the Fast Bikes staffer that had been in for its first service I was met with the reply, "That's the one that was a little overdue, right?"

You could say that. The bike was 2,000 miles over the prescribed mileage for the initial service, miles that were racked up riding to Portugal and back.

As expected, the ZX-10R was handed over in pristine condition and ready for its first and much needed modification – a quickshifter. I'm amazed that the ZX-10R, a bike that mixes it up at the very top end of its class, doesn't have a 'shifter fitted as standard. Being the only bike of the ten that came to the Sportsbike of the Year without one is an immediate and obvious limitation given the colossal strength of the competition.

For a bike that's been developed in 'the white heat of competition' (Kawasaki's words, not mine) and whose track record is immaculate in the hands of Messrs Sykes, Rea, Byrne and Hutchinson, you have to ask why there's no 'shifter? But the situation has been remedied with an afternoon at the HQ of HM Quickshifter in Sittingbourne.

I like a company that specialises. HM's range of expertise and products will suit a variety of demands and pockets, so you can choose the right product for your needs, from the standard entry of the Super Lite, through to the HM Plus then the HM Plus SS all the way to the

Daddy, the HM GP. I have been in the fortunate position over the years to have tried the three tiers of product that have brought me to this special moment now, the HM GP that is now fitted to the ZX-10R. It's a phenomenal tool.

I couldn't possibly cover everything that this 'shifter does in this staffer page. The technology that's fitted to the small bike-mounted module is staggering, controlling and recording every element of every shift. All the data collected can be used to totally individualise each shift and the severity of the re-introduction of power to suit the specific rider, the conditions and track.

I say track as the HM GP is based on the technology that you would use on circuit, as sported by the likes of Sam Lowes and Simone Corsi this season in Moto2, as well as experience on the roads under the guidance of Bruce Anstey, John McGuinness and Gary Johnson.

Admittedly, this is a racer's tool with a capacity to save milliseconds on every shift that over time will turn into valuable seconds. The HM GP reads and records what gear you are in, so if you are flat out in sixth and hunting for an extra gear, as we have all done at some stage, this 'shifter will not cut the power to the coils as it already knows there isn't a seventh. If you catch the gear with your foot accidentally the 'shifter reads the pressure you've added to the lever; if it doesn't match or go beyond the force you have programmed as your limit then it will not change, thus eliminating the false or accidental gear change.

There is more, much more, that I will go through with this piece of kit. At the



Price from new: £12,199

Insurance group: 17

Modifications: £972.00

HM GP Quickshifter

current time I have to admit that it's smarter than me, but over the course of time I will get it nailed. From the initial tests we did 'quietly' around the roads in Sittingbourne the data that came back taught me a lot about my riding; like what revs I was shifting at and the forces used on the lever. Though a racer's tool, my short time on it proves it's great on the road and the tech that comes along with it should not be feared; rather, it's fascinating.

One of the best things about the GP is that you are buying into a relationship with HM who will analyse your data and help you with the perfect settings for you. This is a service that goes beyond the £45 an hour they charge to fit your 'shifter. The ZX-10R takes around three hours to fit, which was enough time to drink the tea and eat the cakes provided. Once on, you have life-long analysis right at the end of the phone. All I need to do now is to collect some data, which I will be doing next week with Al who is putting me through my paces up at Castle Combe. Hopefully the 'shifter won't just feedback 'you're too bloody slow, stop wasting my time' – though there is every chance that it will... 

Thanks to: All the guys at HM Quickshifter 01795 429168 www.hmquickshifter.com



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Time to go scrambling!

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THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Riding two-up and off-roading..."



So, this month I definitely haven't got in as much riding as I would have liked. However, although the miles are a bit thin on the ground, I've made them count. Rather than sticking to the same old roads, the same old cafe and the same old McDonald's (we all do it), I thought I'd try something else!

Firstly, taking a pillion. My girlfriend has never been two-up, so what better way to break her in than a 60-mile round trip with no rest stops?

Surprisingly, the only complaint she had was the seat. I'll admit myself, after an hour or so on board it gives you a bit of a numb arse. Nothing that can't be sorted, I suppose, as Ducati offer a range of seats on all the different Scrambler models. All interchangeable, of course, as one of the Scrambler's primary selling points is customisation after all. The grab handles are cleverly hidden under the seat too, again proving that everything on the bike has been well designed and nothing seems like an after thought.

So that was one thing ticked off the list of things to try with the Scrambler, and next up I was really looking forward to some mild off-roading larks. I slipped into some full Dainese leathers and off I went, exploring for some green lanes.

Probably not the brightest idea I've ever had, but what an absolute hoot it was. I found some hidden gems not too far from me at all, decommissioned quarries, abandoned factories and not a clean, flat piece of Tarmac in sight. If you've never been off-roading, like me, it's all a little bit daunting at first.

However, you wouldn't know it was my first crack at it! Now I'm not saying I turned into a pro overnight, but if you are confident enough to fully open the throttle on rough terrain the Scrambler sorts itself out for you. It seems to be a mixture of the weight and the way the bars and pegs are set up. You can stand up without reaching down for the bars so you can take most of the bumps through your legs, leaving you to steer it easily wherever you want.

There are no riding aids other than ABS so the back tyre spins freely, desperately trying to find traction whilst you wind it on, grinning like a mad man! A quick flick through the dash's menu and you can also turn the ABS off in a matter of seconds, which makes it even more entertaining. Everything is just so raw, there's no electronic interference so you can concentrate on riding and you know exactly how the bike will behave all the time, every time.

Price from new: £6,995
Insurance group: 9

DUCATI
INSURANCE

I got some good snaps for the mag, but felt a little bit guilty riding home with her all dirty. What would the Ducati Owners Club say about me? So a full shampoo and hose off and it looks worthy for a retro bike show again.

But it all feels weird taking a Ducati off-road, a bit like going to a wedding in shorts. Yes, it's brilliant and a right laugh, but it's just not the done thing.

If there's one thing this bike has encouraged me to do, it's explore outside my comfort zone. I've tried new things I wouldn't have had the chance to do if it wasn't for this machine, and that I'm grateful for. Have you ever been past one of those roads recently where you think 'I wonder what's down there?' Thanks to the Scrambler, I haven't.



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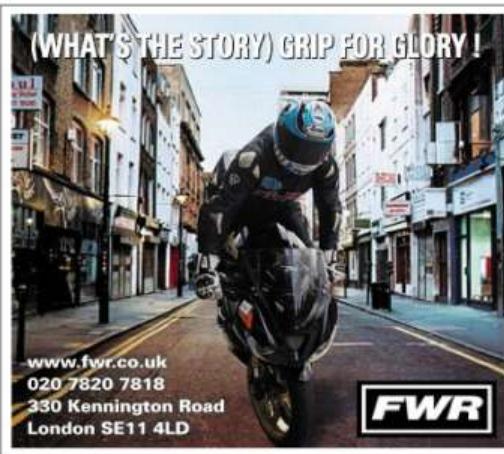
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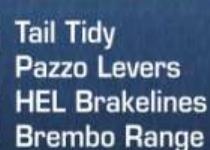
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*Goats can float,
who knew?*

Pit Pass

ULTIMATE ACCESS TO THE WORLD'S RACE PADDocks, RACERS & TEAMS

THE REIGN CONTINUES...

If we were to take the results from the Brno and Silverstone MotoGP rounds as pointers of how the title fight may work out, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Valentino Rossi's tenth crown has been written in the stars already. Not that you could see them, for all the rain at Silverstone...

Valentino's chances had taken a serious dent at Brno, with both his team-mate Jorge Lorenzo and Marc Marquez taking back more points from him and, in fact, Lorenzo taking the championship lead – the Yamaha pair were on equal points, but the Spaniard had more wins. The sheer speed of both of Rossi's main rivals looked ominous for the remaining races, as it did during qualifying for the British round held two weeks later.

Then something intervened, something Rossi has been very short of these last few years – luck. He only posted one really fast lap all weekend, which had dragged him onto the second row of the grid. But even then, it seemed that the last spot on the podium would be the best he could hope for. But, of course, it rained and what followed was a masterclass in wet weather riding. He pushed so hard that Marquez took himself out of the race in an off-the-throttle crash, and now the title race altogether. And Lorenzo suffered more helmet issues this year, this time a badly fogging visor – pardon the pun, but heads will roll

over this second cock-up. We very much doubt he'll be wearing an HJC lid next year...

But what of Rossi now? By the time you read this, his home race of Misano will have happened, and it's likely he'll score well in front of his home fans after smashing it there last year. But what does he do if he wins MotoGP this year? Risk losing the title again? He knows that winning another on top of a tenth will be a tall order, and everyone's time must pass, even a Goat's.

However, has anyone else noticed how many laps he's been doing on a WSB-spec' R1 around Misano this year? He says it's for practice, and for the VR46 academy. Well, that may be partly true, but the rumours say he may be running one of two Yamaha WSB squads in 2016 under his VR46 banner. He's in the running along with Crescent and others to score either the full factory WSB gig, or the secondary berth reputed to be on offer.

It's not beyond the realms of possibility that he moves on from MotoGP if he wins. Going out on top, unbeaten, would be perfect for him and for his legion of fans as there'd be no argument to be had over his status. As he's a fun loving scamp even in his dotage (Biaggi can still score a podium on the wrong side of 45) that paddock could be a new and happy home for him. Plus it could solve a lot of WSB's crowd problems too, couldn't it?

Pit Pass

ULTIMATE ACCESS TO THE WORLD'S RACE PADDOCKS, RACERS & TEAMS



MOLE: RACERS ARE PEOPLE, TOO...

■ Fan adulation is a funny old thing. I've always found it strange the way fans of any sport, music or whatever, choose to happily ignore exactly what kind of people they idolise. The football world is full of it, we see it in the news often enough. Players who apparently warrant legendary status, despite them seeming to be fairly despicable individuals away from the pitch if the gossip columns are anything to go by. Musicians get the same treatment, the worst offenders believing their work changes the world, or any other bullshit they care to come out with. Yet fans will also buy into that same bullshit, for reasons I'm yet to fathom even though I too was a youth at some point in time. One thing I never did, though, was buy it because, and like everyone else on this planet, they're still just people. Fallible, likeable, detestable, lovable, there's always a thorough mix in all walks of life. Think about your place of work. If you work with a big group of people, I'm sure there are those you think are great, those who are OK and kind of merge into the background, and them who are utter arseholes...

The racing world is no different, it's just a big bunch of people encompassing all the traits we're more than familiar with in our own lives. But there are differences, of course. If a rider is on a good wage from a team or sponsors, they have to curb their behaviour in front of fans. I've lost count of the number of times a fan has told me how nice and approachable a particular rider is, when the truth is that I know for a fact the guy is a douche of the highest order. Being within a bubble such as MotoGP, these things become clear before long; you learn who's an idiot, and who isn't. But then there's the passion that racing involves, and how it can quickly turn around the usual face a racer

presents to the world. Take Troy Bayliss. What a legend, I'm firmly in that camp when it comes to this fine Aussie example of a professional. He lives mostly with a big grin on his face, taking the world as it comes and is also usually a breath of fresh air whenever he opens his mouth. However, I once watched him knock a young boy flying after a bad qualifying session. It was at Misano, and the lad was after his autograph. Troy came storming out of his garage heading for the race truck, and to this day I still don't believe he even saw or realised he'd knocked this kid over. The boy's father though, well he was incandescent with rage, banging on the race truck door, shouting for Troy to come out. Troy didn't, but he was probably already at the back of the truck going over his debrief. Unsurprisingly, that chap's view of Troy was irrevocably changed, which was a pity because Troy really is one of the good ones.

Even now in MotoGP, there are riders who will smile and play their part to fans, only to say something derogatory about someone who adores them once out of earshot. Even some of our British riders are like this to some degree, I'm sorry to report. One gives off a butter wouldn't melt impression on TV, but over the last couple of years has become a bit superstar and having spent some off-duty time with him, and hearing his views on life, I quite frankly wouldn't ever want to again. We're saved by those like Scott Redding, as honest a newborn babe that boy. What you see is what you get with Scott, which is what we want. We love to see the person, not a front, and then make up our own minds whether or they're people we like. Keep that in mind next time you're clamouring for your hero's autograph, as he may not quite be the person you think he is...

BSB: BROOKES FOR WSB?

Milwaukee R1 rider Josh Brookes has been bashing the hell out of the BSB field for six races straight by time of writing. And he's done it without anybody being able to keep him in sight. It doesn't make for exciting viewing (although the action elsewhere in the BSB field still does), but watching how commanding he's been at Brands Hatch, Thruxton and Cadwell Park has been eye-opening. And this coincides with a serious loss of form for multiple champ' Shane Byrne. Ever since Shakey had a huge crash at Brands he's not seemed himself, and they've struggled with the bike, turning it inside out at both Thruxton and Cadwell to solve his issues. Only Shane's never-give-up attitude and legendary skills have kept him in the game, although Brookes goes into the final pre-Showdown round at Oulton Park with the lead in the points table, and one serious amount of momentum after three doubles in a row. He's never had a better chance of winning the title, and even if the Yamaha still struggles a tiny bit with top-end speed compared to the others, he's more than making up any deficit. And he's also making a solid case for a shot at WSB next year when Yamaha returns to the series (see separate story). Josh's time in that paddock was mostly confined to the supersport class, and while he did well, it's an arena he'll be keen to return to again some day in the big boy's category. 2016 could be the time, depending on what decisions Yamaha and others make in coming months. Any team running the tuning fork there would be extremely remiss to ignore Brookes considering how he's bent his BSB R1 to his will. Time will tell...



Brookes knocks down a triple double!

GOOD MONTH

Josh Brookes

Laying waste to all before him in BSB – champ' in waiting?

Jorge Lorenzo

Took the title lead at Brno over teammate Rossi, but...

PJ Jacobsen

First ever world series win at Sepang

John Hopkins

Proved he can be very fast on a Ducati

Bradley Smith

New Tech3 MotoGP contract

BAD MONTH

Shane Byrne

Off the boil, yet continues to toil – c'mon Shakey, eye of the tiger!

Jorge Lorenzo

Then he lost it again at Silverstone...

Cal Crutchlow

New contract, but two more DNFs

Tom Sykes

An utterly shite time at Sepang WSB

Jason O'Halloran

Bone-breaking collision with Howie Mainwaring at Thruxton, ouch...



Hopper's got some speed on the Panigale



Cadwell Lark...

WORLD SUPERBIKES: WHERE TO, YAMAHA?

Yamaha's return to WSB is being much heralded, another manufacturer to add to an already impressive list, one MotoGP would love to be able to ape, we're sure. More intriguing though, is exactly who Yamaha will go with. A few months back, it seemed a dead cert that Shaun Muir's Milwaukee BSB team were a shoe-in for the job. Shaun himself had spoken as such and we'd heard that if they leave BSB, Keith Flint's Team Traction Control outfit were primed to step up to the plate and fill the Yamaha void at home. But current rumours say otherwise. Even Ten Kate were put into the frame before they made it publicly clear they would remain with Honda, ever hoping for that new Fireblade due in 2017 is brought forward a year to bring them back in contention. But one team that keeps

cropping up as contenders is Paul Denning's Crescent brigade. With Suzuki due to bring a new GSX-R out very soon, and given his long standing relationship with them, it would appear a strange move. Yet, apparently it's one that could actually happen, and if it does it could, in turn, bring the return of Francis Batta's Alstare team to run Suzukis once more. That'd be great, the series really misses that team, however there's one particular factor that's colouring any Yamaha deal – Marco Melandri. We've heard that any team after the 'factory' status may be forced to take Marco as a rider. A proven race winner perhaps, but not everyone wants to work with the oft moody Italian which could prevent some teams scoring the gig. It also means less room for someone like Josh Brookes, although



we've also learned that as well as a factory squad, there should also be a well supported satellite team. That could be a home for Brookes, especially if Milwaukee make the move they've mooted. Either way, having an pukka R1 in WSB is a big boost to the series.

RACING LINES

Cal Signs

Cal Crutchlow has finally resigned with his LCR squad for a further two years in MotoGP. Interestingly, it was mooted that team-mate Jack Miller may take Cal's place, with the Brit moving to another Honda team. However, he's staying put, which can be no bad thing at all if they keep the semi-factory status. Good work, Cal!

Big Jack Jacked

Big Jack Valentine has parted ways with the Bennetts Suzuki BSB team. All parties say it was a mutually happy separation, and having seen Jack at a recent Suzuki trackday with the team laughing and joking, we'd say there's some truth in that usually ambiguous, yet standard statement with this sort of thing. As for Jack, he's never far from the action, so we expect him to pop up again sometime soon. The series can't do without his trademark northern honesty for too long before we all start missing him...

Chaz & Dave Deals

Both factory WSB pilots Chaz Davies and Davide Guiglano are reported to be close to signing a new deal with the Italian marque for 2016 – and maybe beyond. Davide's speed isn't in question, although his luck certainly is. As for Chaz, well, he's going from strength to strength with four wins this year and should be in with a shout of the title next year.

Max Attacked

Veteran legend Max Biaggi had a sweet and sour experience at his Sepang wildcard outing. Max scored a fantastic podium in the first race, the stuff of dreams really, and good on him. But he was taken out at turn one by an errant rival, lap one, in the second outing. He hit the highs and lows on the same day. A shame, as it could be the last time we see the Roman Emperor in serious action. Then again, never say never... How about a senior's series?

Kent to Moto... GP or 2?

At Brno, Pramac Ducati made it known they'd offered Moto3 series leader Danny Kent a three-year deal to race MotoGP. A tempting proposition, which may never come again if he goes up just one step rather than two, and gets lost in the morass of Moto2. Then Pramac signed Scott Redding, yet Kent says he still has options in MotoGP. Hmm...

Hill Out Too!

Following Jack Valentine straight out of the team management exit door, is former BSB champion Tommy Hill. Tommy parted ways with the Be Wiser Kawasaki team prior to Cadwell Park, with the team citing a difference of opinion regarding the squad's future. It all happened a bit sharpish, which smacks of a disagreement getting quickly out of hand and right into P45 land. While the team was busy explaining themselves away at Cadwell, Hill was posting pictures online of him happily fishing. The truth will out eventually, we're sure.



You don't have to be crazy to take
a Ducati factory bike, but it 'elps...



WORDS: ROOTSY PICS: DUCATI

CRAZY JOE

Andrea Iannone is having a stellar season on his new factory Ducati. But what has been the secret to this surprising success?

Every season throws up surprises; teams or riders that perform miracles that not even Mystic Meg could have predicted. When Andrea Iannone filled the berth vacated by Cal Crutchlow at the end of 2014, few thought that the Italian would stand much of a chance of taming the rabid beast that is the Ducati's Desmosedici MotoGP bike.

Because this is a machine that has been the ruin of many a man. Cal Crutchlow is in good company, with Marco Melandi, Sete Gibernau and Nicky Hayden, not to mention some has-been by the name of Valentino Rossi, all completely unable to turn the Borgo Panigale bike into the winner it once was. Casey Stoner is the only man to have made a success of the

machine, and it was only since his move to Honda that we started to shift our thinking in that his two world championships with Ducati were down to the man, not the machine.

Having been tempted by the brightest star of all, Rossi, then hoping that Cal Crutchlow could bludgeon the Desmosedici into submission (spending millions of Euros in the process) Ducati looked to home riders to fill the team's second seat alongside Andrea Dovizioso, turning the squad into a true Tricolore affair. Andrea Iannone not only made life easy in the team (no tricky new names to remember), but also offered the team a new direction. Here was a home grown rider without a big money pay packet

to justify and a profile low enough not to generate much in the way of expectations. He also had plenty of previous with the recalcitrant Desmo. Testing in 2011 and two seasons at the helm of the Pramac machines (the second of which was positively decent thanks to Ducati diverting new parts his way, not Cal's), meant that both parties knew what they were letting themselves in for. Perhaps this wouldn't be as bad as most feared, maybe it would be OK?

Pre-season testing went well, brilliantly by recent Ducati standards, but still few thought that Iannone would ruffle the feathers of the Aliens come season proper. That all changed when Iannone took the last spot on the



First Italian home at Mugello!

rostrum at Qatar's opening race, and what followed was a series of impressive qualifying and race results. A significant shoulder injury at Le Mans failed to dent his progress, and at the next race, Iannone's home race at Mugello, he was rewarded with his first MotoGP pole position, a second place in the race and taking the honour of first Italian home, ahead of one man crowd invasion catalyst, Rossi.

Lying in a comfortable fourth spot in the series, well ahead of his supposedly senior team-mate, we sat down to chat with Crazy

Joe ahead of the Silverstone race, where he'd finish an out of character eighth in the wet.

Crazy Joe, The Incredible Iannhulk, The Maniac Joe, Joe the Firefighter; Iannone's nicknames suggest an ebullient character, but these epithets must refer to his on track persona as decked out in team gear in the cavernous Ducati hospitality unit Iannone seems anything but crazy. Sure, we've only just met, but throughout our talk there's no hint of anything untoward about his behaviour. When the interview is over I ask him what he'd got up to during the summer break. His deadpan response was that, "I don't do holidays." Now that is crazy – and something his Instagram account exposes as a porky pie (Sicily looked hot...).

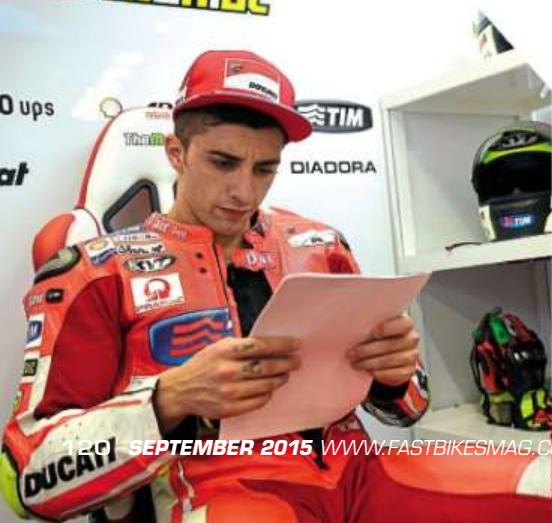
I first asked him if he was surprised about the strength of his performances this year. "No, I am not surprised by my performances this season. This is what I know I am capable of. But for sure I am happy. But why now, not in the past? I have great support with the team, by the factory. There are so many engineers in the box, so many people working and supporting me. When I talk about problems with the bike, everyone listens 100 per cent. This is important to me for my motivation. And this helps me a lot with my consistency. So I am not surprised about my

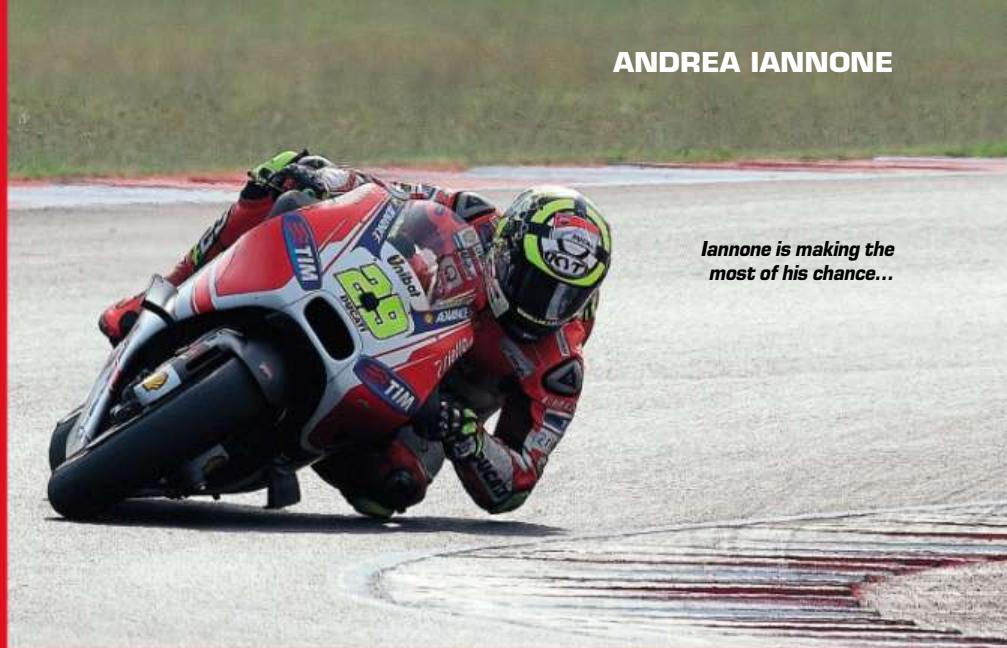
riding, and I still want improvements."

Being in a coveted factory squad is clearly bringing the best out of Iannone, but even though he's out scored Dovi throughout the season, he still seems almost a little shell shocked that he's found himself on a prized factory Ducati. Having been in the relative wilderness of the Pramac team, the rich resources that the Ducati factory can offer are still awe inspiring. "For me, my priority is to stay in the factory team. If you ever want a good result in MotoGP you have to ride for a factory. I have geniuses in the box, and this helps a lot to improve the bike, practice by practice." Here's a man clearly respectful of what his team can deliver to him, and he doesn't want to squander it.

But he's not content, and is happy to let me know that though the bike surprised and impressed him at the start of the season, that early plateau has yet to be surpassed. Incremental steps forward at Brno meant that he left the Czech Republic in a positive mood, despite a technical problem that meant another podium wasn't on the cards. "At Brno things weren't bad for me, it was a good weekend compared to the races before. There I improved the bike practice by practice and we were much closer to the best riders."

There's a work ethic here, a desire to make





each corner better than the last, each lap faster, every session ironing out yet more problems, scoring more points than the year before. His reaction to his dream weekend at Mugello is a sign of that, “Pole position at Mugello was fantastic. I slept well that Saturday! I was proud to get my first MotoGP pole at my home race, and then get my first important podium, I was also first Italian bike, and on an Italian bike in an Italian team with the Italian fans. It was very special. But for sure I want more. I want more because we stay here for the best result.”

Who knows what that ‘best result’ could be. But any rider that can escape the Pramac team is not short on talent, and Iannone recognised that his two years in the satellite team were the best thing for him. “For sure, when I am at Pramac I have good support. It was not the same bike as the factory machine, but it was still good. With my riding and professionalism and my strengths I came to the factory team. But at Pramac, these years were important. It was a really good school. Now I have everything. But this is thanks to my time at Pramac, and I understand a lot. Now I have a better bike than last year, and I think I use it 100 per cent.”

Look back on Iannone’s career and you sense that he’s a man who sees the



RACE FEATURE



The first test on the Pramac



With Iannone performing well, the Italian renaissance is nearly complete....

value of the opportunities presented to him. Three opening years of nothing special in the 125cc class on bikes that wanted for a bit of Aprilia magic (read money) was interrupted by a win in the rain in the 125 class in China that propelled him into the focus of teams. Scraps and tussles in Moto2 with what would become the cream of the MotoGP crop proved that he lacked nothing in fight. "Yes, there have been moments that have accelerated my career, but everything is important, all the steps along the way."

Nonetheless, he's certainly made the best with what's been given to him. Born in Italy, but 200 miles south of the Rimini hotbed of pocket bike racing, he and his family plotted a course to the world championship that incorporated both the Italian and Spanish championships. Once in the big league, he was most well known for headbutting Pol Espargaro (never wise in a crash helmet), but this brush with controversy instilled a professionalism in him that is retained today.

Though Moto2 has been criticised by many for being an irrelevant stepping stone, three third places finishes in his three years in the class was enough to attract Pramac's attention. Giving him the opportunity to graduate into MotoGP, Iannone is a strong supporter of the class, "Moto2 is a good class, really good, because I fight with strong riders, Marc, Pol, Bradl. I win races here, I fight and then I get the chance to race for Pramac."

Unlikely as his rise may be, no-one can deny that Iannone is not making the most of

his chance as a factory rider. He claims to feel no pressure in the team, not even being an Italian on a Ducati, "No, I don't have pressure being Italian. There is a lot of passion for MotoGP, of course, but it is happiness, not pressure." And perhaps that's the key to success on a Ducati. No-one gave Casey Stoner much of a chance on the bike, while it's been piled on every other factory rider until Iannone arrived under the radar.

I'll be honest, I wanted more Crazy, more Maniac in Iannone – after all, that's what he's selling. But he's a serious man, wanting to squeeze every ounce of the experience he's been offered. So it's clear that he keeps the craziness for his performances on track. Brave, talented and a real racer, we're now seeing the real Andrea Iannone, a man who can sling it to the top of the standings in qualifying and be in the mix nearly all race long. Like he says, the pressure's not on him – it's on Ducati. By luck or (more likely) good judgement, they've got a serious talent on their hands and it's now down to the factory to supply him with a machine that can live up to Iannone's massive potential.

ANDREA IANNONE: CAREER

- ▷ 2005 – 125cc – Abruzzo Aprilia – 20th
- ▷ 2006 – 125cc – Campetella Jnr Aprilia – 22nd
- ▷ 2007 – 125cc – WTR Blauer Aprilia – 20th
- ▷ 2008 – 125cc – IC Aprilia – 10th
- ▷ 2009 – 125cc – Ongetta Aprilia – 7th
- ▷ 2010 – Moto2 – Fimco FTR – 3rd
- ▷ 2011 – Moto2 – Speed Master Suter – 3rd
- ▷ 2012 – Moto2 – Speed Master Speed Up – 3rd
- ▷ 2013 – MotoGP – Pramac Ducati – 12th
- ▷ 2014 – MotoGP – Pramac Ducati – 10th
- ▷ 2015 – MotoGP – Ducati – currently 4th



Cal's defection meant that Iannone effectively swapped fairings in 2014



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Clive Padgett

Hello to all! We're just in the middle of the Classic TT practice week; Bruce is sat down with the boys and we're working through stuff with the YZR. We've also brought along a Yamaha OW-01 for Dan to ride, which we actually raced with Rob Mac back in 1989, finishing third at the Hungaroring in WSB race, beating some factory efforts, a great result. The bike has been sat all those years since, so we've stripped her, gone through her putting some modern fork internals in, some new wheels and brake calipers, just to make it safe. It should be a bit of a weapon, and a lovely bike to ride around the Isle of Man. Bruce is peaking though, he sat down for ages in front of his YZR500. He's even sticking on a GoPro camera for his lap tonight. He took ages setting it up properly, and even suggested selling the rights to someone so we could all have a little holiday! There's never been a lap of Bruce riding the YZR around here on camera, so it'll be a wonderful thing to have.

However, thus far we've not managed to get much time in on it at all in practice. We had one lap on Monday night, but it was a controlled lap because of incidents. And the other sessions have been cancelled due to the weather, but hopefully tonight we'll remedy that and he can have a flying lap, going through Bray seeing what it feels like, and checking we can get round with the fuel in each bike's tank. In actual fact, this OW-01 was ridden in 1989 by Phil Hogg, a wonderful man who became the fastest Manxman ever on it back then. Sadly he passed away that same

week on a little 250. But what great rider, I thought the world of him and his family is lovely...

But the bike is fantastic. When you stand there looking at it you can't believe it's 26-years-old. It doesn't look dated, and this even has all the original Deltabox stickers on the frame and swingarm, it's wonderful.

But Clive, I can hear you thinking, haven't you done some other racing you need to tell us about? You'd be right. We, of course, did the Ulster and it was brilliant. Bruce won Thursday's Dundrod 150 superbike race, then we won Saturday's superbike race too, which was terrific. We've done it five times with Bruce now, and for three of those five he's won the main race of the weekend. He did the fastest lap of the week too, although didn't quite manage to break his own lap record. He didn't do the last race, the conditions weren't great and a few on the grid didn't fancy going around. Bruce was pleased enough and asked if I didn't mind him not doing it. I said of course mate, whatever your decision is we'll support you. He'd done enough already, I think.

Then there was Dan Kneen, and he also did a great job. He was fourth on Thursday, and though he fell off at the hairpin in the next superbike event, he was running strongly at the time. In the wet race he finished sixth but did the third fastest lap. It's another couple of strong results for him, he's going in exactly the right direction.

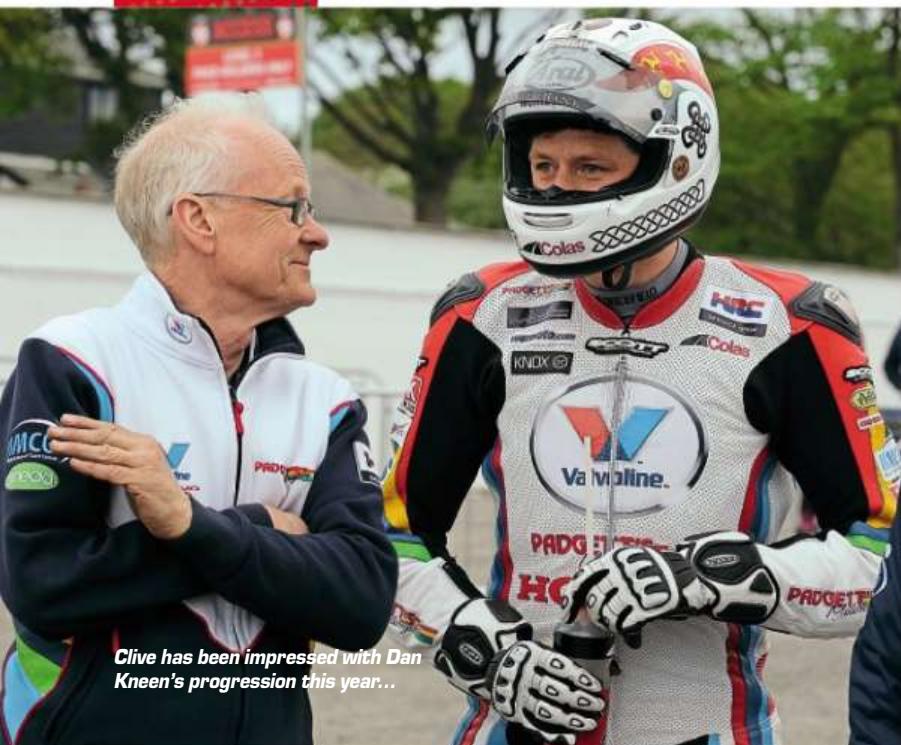
Guy Martin's crash was horrible, though. Awful. Bruce said that he could tell Guy's tyre had gone off, he came through from fifth and closed up on Guy. He was able to sit there behind him quite easily, with the greatest of respect to Guy, and was planning his move but then the accident happened. We've never worked with Guy, the list of our racers over the years is endless, but never with him. He's a very interesting character, he knows his stuff alright. We had a great conversation at the TT about an old TZ700 he's rebuilding, asking if we had any bits. It's just unfortunate there's this mad media frenzy around him with press, spectators and fans. OK, he's created it himself a bit, but now it could be looked at as a problem – and now he's stuck with it. It's probably a bigger problem for himself than any team he's with. I don't know if it's a good or bad problem though, certainly bad when it comes to working on the bikes, but good in terms of publicity, great in fact.

Anyway, we're here in the IoM and about to go up for a bite to eat and a couple of pints. Our local friend Colin has been helping us, his mum making us some bacon butties, and Colin always brings us some special sausages. We'll all be 25-stone by the time we get home!

But otherwise we're ready to go, Howard has stripped and rebuilt the YZR a couple of weeks ago, replacing any bits that needed changing. Even after a single lap on Monday he had a good look over it. We're careful with it, it's a delicate bit of kit that was never meant to go around the island, so we stick in new pistons and the like which I've had since the early nineties when we raced GP. You can't race this bike around on old parts, that'd be crazy.

Anyway, hopefully next month I'll be able to report some good news again, fingers crossed!

Clive has been impressed with Dan Kneen's progression this year...



Gary Johnson

I was a bit gutted to miss out on the Ulster Grand Prix this year, but sorting a bike to ride just wasn't possible in the end. That's just how it goes in racing sometimes. People don't see the work that goes on behind the scenes to sort out rides and the like.

Anyway, I didn't have time to dwell on it too long, as I had another trip to Spa to take my mind off of things. Racing for Team Monex, my mate Nick Edgley and I went back over to Belgium to race in a six-hour endurance race on some Daytona 675s. I can't get enough of that track, and the gig turned out pretty sweet as we wrapped up the 600-class win and finished sixth overall, having been up against some pretty mega teams from the world endurance championship. A proper good do.

But I'm now at one of my favourite events of the year, the Classic TT. It's a far more relaxed event than the TT proper. People let their hair down and have a right laugh, enjoying some quality racing and the spectacle of seeing such a huge variety of machinery competing – from full on ex-GP500s to bikes someone's mackled together at home in their shed with some gaffa tape.

I got over here a few days ago. It's practice week, but so far the weather's been a bit of a knob, so we've all been a tad restricted on track time. This being the case, I did get a full lap in on my Team Winfield Yamaha FJ1200 on Monday and it turns out things went quite well.

The bike is the same one that I rode here last year, but it's been ridden by so many people since that the settings are all over the shop. It didn't feel all that great to ride, going wide everywhere, but a call from my mate told me I'd actually set the second fastest time in the F1 class, just 1mph down on my team mate Ryan Farquhar who's topping the time sheets, with Michael Dunlop third. I'll



Gaz, having a blast...

Pic: Gary Hinson, manxmania.com

take a time like that to be getting on with for now.

There's loads of improving to do on the bike, so I'm hopeful of a decent result, but enjoying myself is the real goal here and I'm doing a good job of that so far!

I've also got John Chapman's beautiful MV to compete on in the 500 race on bank holiday Monday. It's an ace little bike and I enjoyed taking it out for a spin up the pier when we got here. The gearbox and engine are bob-on, but it has quite a challenging chassis.

Riding any old bike is such a different experience to the modern stuff and it pays to be mechanically sensitive else the chances are that the bike won't make the finish line. I'm not that harsh on my race bikes, so my riding style seems to suit these old girls. The biggest challenge is getting used to weaker brakes and harsher fuelling, which you're typically on top of after a few rides. Hopefully the weather's going to sort itself out and I'll be able to bang in a few decent laps before next week's races. She'll be reet...



Two Siblings Racing



Surely a jump start?

With the championship up for grabs, Team FB had it to play it smart at Cadwell Park

WORDS: DANGEROUS BRUCE

PICS: ALEX JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY

Having bagged the win at Silverstone, we knew we could wrap up the Open 600 championship at the sixth round of the No Limits Racing endurance series, but it would have meant taking our sixth win of the season to do so. Game on!

If there's one thing I've learned about racing over the years it's that things seldom go to plan. In fact, owing to a major cock-up on my part before we even got to Cadwell Park, our chances of securing even a bit of track time on the scheduled test day was looking slim. I didn't get our entries in, and owing to the popularity of the No Limits paddock, the test was rammed. Having spent the morning making daisy chains, Brod and I eventually got out for some much-needed laps in the afternoon and the little R6 was feeling mint.

Apart from at the Donington Park round we've not touched the set-up all season on the bike's Ohlins suspension, which Go Racing Development's Mark Sadler dialled in right at the start of the year. Agile and stable, it proved to be the weapon we needed it to be around the tight and technical Lincolnshire circuit. The motor was on form, too, although we were really struggling to determine our gearing. Brod was changing gears where I wasn't and vice versa. We ended the test day really confused about what sprockets to fit, and ended up taking a bit of a gamble.

Brod's begun riding in the Newcomer 600 class to bag a bit more track time and so he was out first that next morning, dropping straight into 1m 38s and securing an eighth place start amid a full grid of novices. As always, we split the 45-minute endurance qualifying session, which Brod went out in first. Owing to the sheer volume of traffic from the 45 entered teams, his best lap times dropped back to 41s and I didn't do much better clocking 39s. To add to my embarrassment even more, Brod had his first sprint race immediately after our qualifying session and clocked consistent 37s, finishing fifth. I was really chuffed for him, but wanted to give him a slapping all the same.

Get a move on, Dangerous!



I can't get enough of Cadwell Park but it's a bit of a slog walking down to the bottom pitlane, which was where we had to move our set-up ahead of the day's three-hour race. The No Limits guys had done an awesome job of setting up sufficient garages for all of the teams; each allotted their own working area. The atmosphere down the bottom was mega relaxed and friendly. We've met some great people this season and the endurance racers have got to be some of the most chilled racers I've ever known, always up for a laugh and happy to help one another whenever they can.

RACING KNOWLEDGE: BRAKE DISCS

Quality brakes are the key to a great bike, explains Andy Wilkes from Performance Parts Ltd...

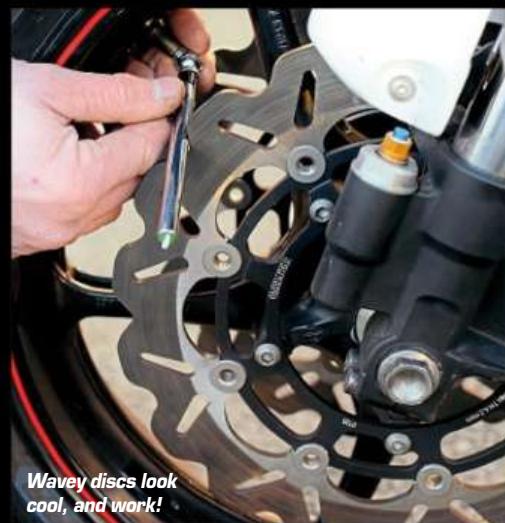
Inferior quality discs and pads will often give inadequate braking performance and are prone to poor heat dissipation, leading to brake fade and eventual warping of the rotors. It's normal to see slight discolouration of a rotor, but an overheated disc surface will look dark blue or purple. If it's warped, you will feel the disc judder or pulsate through the lever.

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For more info head to www.performanceparts-ltd.com



Wavey discs look cool, and work!

The MotoGP line.



Bloody show off...

As always, I was starting the race, with Brod ready to take over at the end of the first hour. Sprinting from one side of Cadwell's start straight to the other can be done in three strides, so you can imagine how tricky it was to get off the grid without colliding with others. There were bikes on the grass, others smashing into each other and I found myself letting off the throttle to avoid rear-ending some poor bloke, but still got a decent enough start and found myself circulating in 10th overall and first of the 600s. Those first few laps were frustrating, being held up by a couple of thousands, but feeling too nervous to go and do any drastic moves made me behave like a Labrador on its last legs.

Pit boards are great. We always run a countdown to our rider change, as well as lap times and our gap to the riders in front and behind. I had around a whole lap's lead by the time Brod and I made that first switch.

Brimmed to the top, Brod set off whilst I drank water like a fish and ate like a pig. An hour around Cadwell takes it out of you, especially when the temperatures are warm. Consistent and smooth, the team's novice rider did a sterling job of keeping us at the

front, running consistent 1m 39s and looking super comfortable. I can't describe how proud I am of my brother, which is why I never, ever tell him. He can't read, so it's OK to write it.

The original plan was that I'd ride for the last hour solid, but with such a huge lead over the guys in second, we had plenty of time to pit and change riders. Hanging a leg out down the start straight signalled I was going to pit to my team, giving Brod a chance to get his lid on and ready himself for the final 30 minutes in the saddle. Having clocked 101 laps, Brod crossed the line and took the chequered flag to our delight. Champions, the whole lot of us. That goes for the team, the sponsors, the people who've helped us out along the way. One rider can't win a race alone, no matter how hard they try.

Speaking of riding alone, the celebrations carried on the next day when Brod cracked on with the remaining novice races and bounced back from a crash to his first podium in the sprint races. We've got a new set of fairings on order from Race Products, so they should make the bike look a whole lot better in time for the next round at Anglesey in a few weeks. We can't wait. 



Are great things beckoning for Jack?

ON THE GRID

Each month we shine the spotlight on a racer who's caught our attention.
Meet Jack Drury...

Having won 14 races in the No Limits Racing Newcomer 600 championship on his George H. Kime Transport sponsored Daytona 675, the Lincs lad looks well on his way to securing the novice championship title in the very near future. "I've had such a great year and am blown away with how well things went for me at my local circuit," said Jack. "The bike has been working a treat and I feel really confident on it. I didn't imagine being able to clock consistent 1m 35s on the Triumph, but I'm certainly not complaining."

Jack's success and astonishing pace has urged him and his team into considering competing in the National Superstock 600 championship next season. All help is welcome at www.georgehkime.co.uk



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Chaz Davies

Hi guys, we're currently in the middle of our looong summer break. It's almost two months, and while that may be crap for you as there's no WSB to watch, I actually quite like it. We don't really have a winter break, like MotoGP does, and we start racing in February, so I prefer having time off in summer when we can go out and do stuff, which you can't do much in winter. It's the only part of the year where I can unwind.

That being said, we did spend a bit of time in Portland, Oregon, after the Laguna Seca races. It's been on my radar for a few years, but was a bit of a risk in some ways because had the races gone shite I wouldn't have felt much like going there. If things don't go well I just want to go home! But anyway, Portland is famous for its craft breweries, so as we had something to celebrate of course we got stuck right into that!

It was a good fun couple of days, and I got back to London for a single day before heading off to Malaysia. A quick turnaround, true, but the good thing was we were on it at Sepang right away. Well, at first...

Last year was a complete nightmare; not just in the power stakes, but with tyre life. You'd do four laps and the tyre would overheat and it was like jumping on a different bike from one lap to the next, it was that severe a difference. This year we improved that in a lot of different ways and we could get at least ten laps in before things dropped off, which was on a par with everyone else.

I was a little bit worried about the power differential, especially after Thailand. That place was a nightmare for us, it felt like we had a really flat engine, something wasn't quite right. We have made some small steps now with the development of the engine, but not enough to make it feel so different from those Thai races. But we were competitive with Kawasaki and only losing a bit to Aprilia, so for once there we could keep them in sight.

But then on Saturday I lost all feeling with the bike and started thinking a top five would be a good result. It confused the hell out of me, like I lost all feeling and talent within the space of one session. I went fast on Friday morning, but then couldn't go any quicker. It wasn't until Sunday morning that we improved the bike, and it was way better and a great turnaround.

In race one Tom Sykes flew out of the blocks, but I was thinking his pace was a bit too quick. Early on, when I was happy with my lap times, he was over a second faster. If I abused the tyre like that to do those kinds of times he was doing, I knew I'd struggle to finish the race. So I didn't know if he had something in hand, but then I noticed I'd pulled a couple of tenths of him, then it was a second, then two seconds. He had really overworked the tyre, while we were babying it, towing the line between



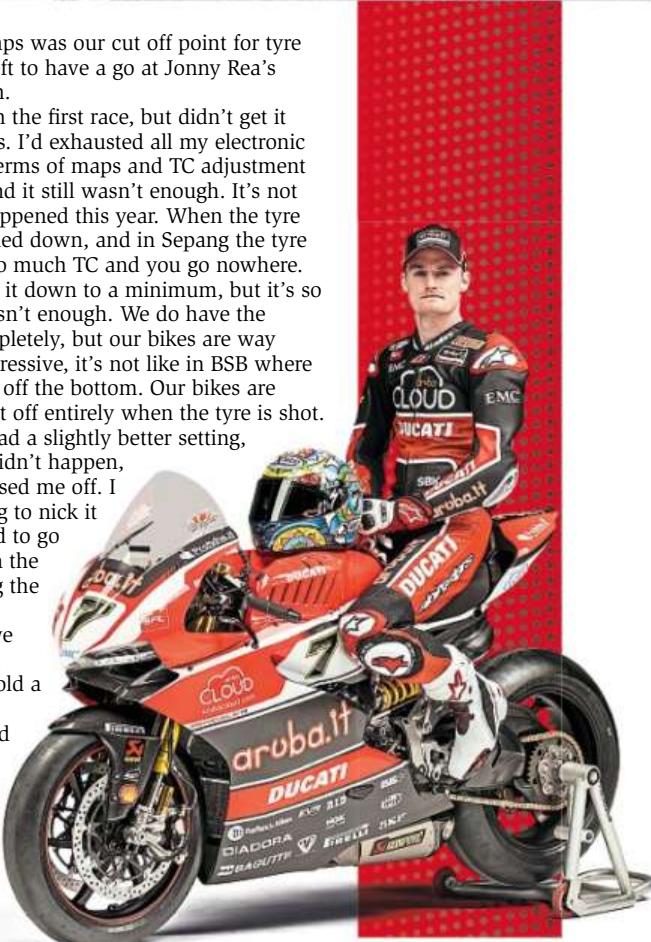
use and abuse. Eleven laps was our cut off point for tyre life, and I had enough left to have a go at Jonny Rea's Kawasaki at the last turn.

I felt I could have won the first race, but didn't get it right with the electronics. I'd exhausted all my electronic options in race one, in terms of maps and TC adjustment that I have control of, and it still wasn't enough. It's not the first time this has happened this year. When the tyre goes off the TC gets turned down, and in Sepang the tyre can spin like mad, so too much TC and you go nowhere. We have buttons to trim it down to a minimum, but it's so severe in Malaysia it wasn't enough. We do have the option to turn it off completely, but our bikes are way over-tuned and very aggressive, it's not like in BSB where the bikes are a lot softer off the bottom. Our bikes are really hard to ride with it off entirely when the tyre is shot.

In the second race I had a slightly better setting, though my win nearly didn't happen, and that would have pissed me off. I thought Jonny was going to nick it off me too, but I just had to go that small step deeper in the last turn. He was closing the line and it was getting tighter, and in the end we just touched and I had a slow enough speed to hold a good enough line to get out of the turn better and cross that line first!

He wasn't happy at first, but fair play to him, he got over it quickly. So after another win, I had my holiday with ten days in Bali, then coming home and prepping for Jerez!

“JONATHAN REA WASN'T HAPPY AT FIRST, BUT FAIR PLAY, HE GOT OVER IT...”



Steve Parrish



Hello all, what a busy month it's been, flat out here there and everywhere. I had a great time at the Donington Classic event with Freddie Spencer, Niall Mackenzie, Ron Halsam and a bunch of other old blokes. I rode a load of old race bikes, and then some Triumphs, like David Beckham's Bonneville and one of Tom Cruise's Mission impossible machines. They were on knobbly tyres around Donny, but it was weirdly good fun. I actually managed to overtake Mackenzie on one of them – by cutting straight across the grass between Craner Curves and the Old Hairpin! I hear Mike 'Spike' Edwards almost binned Spencer's Honda RS500 triple on cold tyres, running on at turn one. That would have been interesting trying to explain that one away...

An 'old' event I can't be part of is the Pro-Am that's coming back at Silverstone's MotoGP round. That's because of a scheduling cock-up when it went from Donington to Silverstone, as the Classic TT is on the same time and I'm working the whole week on the Isle of Man.

Me, James Whitham and Steve Plater will all be there. Speaking of which, bookings are up on last year's event for the Classic, but there's no doubt that having the GP on the same weekend will have affected attendance for both. The Pro-Am will be funny, although will look awfully slow around Silverstone on those old things, maybe they could shift it to the Stowe circuit! I'll bet the lads will be switching each other's engine's off, holding onto rear seats and all sorts, which should spice things up.

Another great event to go to, if you enjoy the classic stuff, is one I attended in Holland. It's in a little town called Eext, near Assen. They shut the whole village off and stick bales everywhere, and everyone thraps round on bikes. I was riding the bike Barry Sheene won the 1975 Dutch TT on, and there were other old racers there like Wil Hartog – even John Reynolds came along! It was such a fun event, tearing around and it's quite dangerous as the surfaces aren't great; part of it is on cobblestones and so on. But it was smashing with a great crowd, you should go next year as it's easy to get to and a bloody good laugh.

Lastly with the old stuff, I should be getting a crack on one of the rotary Nortons on the IoM, and maybe even a Pro-Am bike as I've heard they will try and bring some over after the event before the Classic TT finishes. If there's any left, that is!

Coming back to the modern world, how good was the WSB racing from Sepang? And Max Biaggi getting on the podium was pretty impressive, too. His experience

counted, just taking care of his tyres so when everyone else's wore out, he stole through and stood on the box. In fact, the tyres made the racing even more interesting.

I have no idea what Tom Sykes was up to in race one; he zoomed off like a shot dog and lead most of it, but then by the end was lapping 15 seconds slower! And then Chaz Davies in the second race, wow, I wouldn't say he's a soft touch but he stamped his authority there alright. I know Jonny Rea was pissed off at first, as he thought he'd won the title, but later on he cooled down and admitted he'd of done the same. That's what racers do.

Now the title will be finished in Europe, which will be great. Going back to Max, Eurosport missed his podium interview by going to an ad break, it was so annoying. It's just some producer sat in France who isn't into bikes, not realising that it was quite an important thing to watch, getting on the box at age 46, or whatever he is. I wonder if he'll do any more? He had the joy of a podium, and the hell of getting knocked off his bike, the full gamut of the racing experience. Either way, it was nice to see and what a shame the WSB summer break is two months long. Whose bright idea was that?

In MotoGP, as it comes to the UK, it's all square between Lorenzo and Rossi. You can just imagine Marc Marquez is praying both those Yamahas wipe each other out at some point. One mistake by either of them and he's back in it, unless he can win all the races and get Pedrosa in front of them. Then it could really hot up, and I can only think Rossi and Lorenzo will be hammer and tongs from now on, and that means anything can happen! It's the most excited I've been over MotoGP for years – you just can't predict what's going to happen.

I should end this month, of course, with being an idiot. This time I partook in a wee bit of tractor theft. Well, not theft per se, it's my mate's tractor I pinched. He was ploughing outside and went off for his tea, so I nicked it and left it behind a hedgerow with my blowup doll in the driver's seat. However, it ended up causing a bit more concern than I planned, so when they were about to call the fuzz I had to own up to it. I can't afford to be arrested again! Till next month!



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